

In their own way, Nepal's jungle wildlife reserves are as spectacular as the mountains.

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Contemporary artist Xu Bing's works are intended to construct obstacles to people's habitual ways of thinking.

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"I am not their father, but in my heart, all of them are my children."

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## Workers' Union Chairman Dismissed

By Su Wei

Just two months after his election as chairman of the Sanhuan Sagami New Technology workers' union, Tang Xiaodong was dismissed from his position of director of the administrative department.

The dismissal notice, dated November 3, says Tang had failed to fulfill his duties, which had affected the company's production and reputation. Tang was employed as director of administrative at the Sino-Japanese joint venture, based in Haidian District, in September 2000.

According to the legal department of the Beijing Federation of Workers' Unions, Tang is the first

chairman of a workers' union in Beijing to be removed from an administrative position since the law governing workers' unions was revised in October 2001.

### Unfinished work

In an interview with *Beijing Today*, Tang said when he was first employed as director of the administrative department at Sanhuan Sagami, he found that the company did not sign contracts with its employees. "I was once a personnel manager in a state-owned enterprise, and I know that the labor law requires companies to sign contracts with its employees," he said. "I subsequently raised this matter with the general manager, Fukuda Hideo. In fact none of the company staff were aware at that

time that they had the right to sign a contract with the company."

Around one year later, staff with a Beijing *hukou* (permanent residence certificate) signed employment contracts with the company and received insurance policies for medical treatment, unemployment and workplace injury.

However in June this year, Hideo canceled all welfare entitlements. "If the general manager had not decided to cancel the employees' welfare benefits, this situation would not have arisen," Tang said. "The total annual amount of welfare was around 110,000 yuan."

Tang says after Hideo announced his decision to rescind welfare entitlements, many of the

Tang Xiaodong still comes to work despite having being dismissed from his position as director of the administrative department of Sanhuan Sagami New Technology.

Photo by Li Guiming



staff asked him to speak for them. "I told them that as an administrative manager I had to listen to the boss. I did not want to lose my job," he said. "But I told them if we had a workers' union, it would protect our legal rights."

At the urging of the staff, Tang checked with the Haidian Workers' Union Federation on the requirements for establishing a workers' union and then started on the groundwork. He says at first, Hideo had expressed support for the establishment of a union, saying that it could resolve conflicts within the company.

But on August 14, Bao Jie, vice general manager of Sanhuan Sagami, asked Tang to "suspend preparations for the establish-

ment of a union." The following day, Tang says Hideo told him that he "hoped there would be more time for the preparation." Tang responded that a delay was impossible. "I was thinking that if I obeyed them, the workers' union might never be established and the rights of the Chinese staff would never be protected."

Three days later Hideo agreed that the workers' union would be established within one week, when meeting representatives from the Haidian Workers' Union Federation. However several days later, Tang received a notice from Hideo requiring him to present all the materials for the establishment of the union and wait for the matter to be discussed at the company's monthly administrative management meeting. Tang ignored the notice. "If I had done so, it would have meant a long delay, as the next meeting was not due until the middle of September," he said, adding, "It is a workers' union established by the Chinese staff. The administrative management staff have no right to interfere."

On August 22, the day that the workers' union was formally established, Bao Jie and production director Nishio Yoshihiko warned Tang again not to establish the workers' union and rejected an invitation to attend the establishment ceremony.

The meeting went ahead, however, and Tang was elected chairman of the workers' union with an overwhelming majority of the vote.

The union's first document, drafted on September 9, requests that by the end of September, the company should sign employment contracts with all staff and provide them with insurance; pay all staff for overtime; maintain current welfare entitlements; dismiss one of the unpopular management staff and give authorization for the union to open its own bank account. "We received no response from the company," Tang said.

On November 3, a notice was posted declaring that Tang had failed to fulfill his duties, which had affected the company's production and reputation. As a consequence, he had been removed from the position of director of the administrative department. The notice also said that Tang should stay at home, write a self-criticism and wait for further instruction.

Jiao Rong, an employee of the company, told *Beijing Today* that he and the majority of workers at Sanhuan Sagami did not believe Tang had failed to fulfill his duty. "Tang is the only one that has stood up for us and sought to protect our rights. It is we workers who wanted, and formed, a union, and we workers who elected Tang as our chairman. His removal is a company administrative order, but I am opposed to it," he said.

According to Chinese law, the basic duty of a workers' union is to protect the legal rights of the members; a company cannot transfer the chairman of a union

to a different position before the expiration of his appointment without the approval of the workers' union committee and a related federation; and the chairman of a workers' union cannot be dismissed without a vote by the union members.

### Awaiting a decision

Tang says on receiving the notice, he immediately reported to the Haidian Workers' Union Federation, and was told that it would talk to the company and resolve the issue.

According to workers of the company, on the following day, Hideo reassured that the reason Tang was removed was that he used the workers' union for his personal purpose, and claimed that it was not the workers' union, but Tang that the company could not accept. He also allegedly promised that the company would sign contracts with its staff.

Two days later, Yu Hai, the newly appointed head of the administrative department, called a meeting for all the committee members of the workers' union by an administrative order. At the meeting, Yu requested these members to vote for Tang's removal from his position. In the subsequent vote, all members abstained, except for one, who voted against the proposal.

Last Monday, staff from the company asked Tang to review the contracts that the company had requested them to sign, saying that some clauses were unfair. Tang then took their opinions and presented them to the company. "Tang is the chairman not only in the reality but also in our minds," Jiao said.

When *Beijing Today* contacted Hideo last week, he declined to be interviewed, as he would be unable to communicate directly without an interpreter. He suggested talking to vice general manager Bao Jie. However *Beijing Today* has to date been unable to contact Bao.

According to a report in *Beijing Times*, the company consulted lawyers before removing Tang from his post. "We confirmed that there would be nothing wrong in removing Tang," Bao was quoted as saying in the article.

According to the law department of the Beijing Federation of Workers' Unions, the company has violated the law in removing Tang from his position. The department also points out that by using an administrative order to punish Tang, the company has contravened labor contract regulations. However, it says further investigation is required to determine whether the company had used the removal of Tang from his job as director of administrative as a means of depriving him of the post of chairman of the workers' union, and held a meeting for the workers' union through an administrative order in an attempt to have him voted out of office. The department pointed out that if those claims proved true, then the company was in violation of the law. (Continued on page 2)



## Crowning Beauty

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Last Saturday, Miss Ireland, 19-year-old Rosanna Davison (center), was crowned Miss World 2003 in Sanya, Hainan.

Second place went to Miss Canada, Nazanin Afshin-Jam (right), while Miss China - Guan Qi from Jilin Province - came third, the best result ever for China in a Miss

World competition.

This was the first time for China to host the Miss World competition since it was first held in 1951.

Photo by Lu Beifeng

## Athens Olympics a Hot Ticket in China

By Hou Mingxin

Although the opening ceremony for the 2004 Athens Olympics is still some 250 days off, 70 percent of the tickets allocated to China by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have been sold, according to sources from the General Administration of Sport.

Of the total 5.3 million tickets for the Games, 3 million will be distributed among the 201 national committees under the IOC for sale to the public.

In September, a center was jointly set up by Hong Kong-based China Travel International (CTI) and Beijing-based China Sport Consultation (CSC) to take sole charge of ticket sales.

So far, China has received two batches of more than 3,500 tickets from the organizing committee for the 2004 Olympics. Those tickets have almost sold out, ticketing center staff member Gong Xiaofan told *Beijing Today*, and China is currently applying to the IOC for more.

Ticket prices range from 15 to 950 euro, or

over 100 to 8,000 yuan. There are four price grades for opening ceremony tickets: 100, 350, 750 and 950 euro. Closing ceremony ticket prices cost 50, 100, 500 and 700 euro.

Tickets for 18 sports events are available, for prices ranging from 13 to 60 euro, with those for diving, table-tennis and badminton proving the most hotly-demanded in China, said Gong.

Chinese citizens wishing to attend the 2004 Olympics must be part of a group, and travel costs range from 11,800 yuan to 21,800 yuan per person.

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# Customs Regulation to Fulfill WTO Commitment

By Hou Mingxin

China will further cut import duties to fulfill commitments made to the World Trade Organization in 2001, Liu Wenjie, deputy director of the General Administration of Customs, said at a press conference in Beijing Tuesday.

More than 3,000 customs documents that went against WTO rules and international practice

have been sorted and revised since 2000, according to Liu.

Apart from the amended customs law, a newly-amended national regulation on import and export duties has been promulgated and will take effect as of January 1, 2004, he said.

A new regulation on intellectual property protection will be published shortly and a customs announcement on the predefinition

of place of origin is under deliberation, according to Liu.

Meanwhile, China is reducing tariff rates yearly. In 2003, the average tariff rate was cut from 12 percent to 11 percent. In 2002, the figure was reduced from 15.3 percent to 12 percent, Liu said.

Liu went on to say that the decrease of tariffs spurred Chinese imports and helped increase tariff

income.

Liu acknowledged that the reduction of tariff rates served to promote the integration of the domestic and international market and China will further the downward progress according to WTO arrangements.

Improved customs management also helped to create a fair, transparent and stable environment for companies, Liu said.



Tongrentang eyes overseas market. Photo by Bqb

## Li Ka-shing and Tongrentang to Set Up Medicine JV

By James Liu

Hong Kong's Hutchison Whampoa has announced plans to invest HK \$1.68 billion (about 1.8 billion yuan) to set up a 50-50 medicine joint venture with China's leading traditional Chinese medicine maker, Beijing Tongrentang Group.

The new JV company, which is to be named Hutchison Tongrentang Medicine Investment Company, is expected to get US \$250 million direct investment from both sides. The two parties are currently discussing specific financial issues, including whether to adopt the Chinese or Hong Kong accounting standard.

Jin Yongnian, public relations manager of Tongrentang, confirmed the joint venture and told *Beijing Today* that in the following several days his company would sign the contract with Li Ka-shing's Hutchison Whampoa. "This move highlights Tongrentang's determination to accelerate overseas development," Jin said.

Beijing Tongrentang Group will either invest 232 million shares it holds in its domestically-listed company, Beijing Tongrentang, or part of its non-listed assets, such as its factories or drugstores. At of the end of September, the A-share listed Tongrentang recorded 4.84 yuan in net asset value per share.

Hutchison Whampoa currently is the second-largest shareholder of Tongrentang Technologies, a Hong Kong-listed subsidiary of Tongrentang Group.

The Development Research Center of the State Council in 2002 drafted a 10-year development target for Tongrentang Group, suggesting the group establish stable domestic and overseas sales networks with 500 domestic and 100 overseas chain drugstores within three to five years, and achieve an annual sales revenue of 20 billion yuan within 5 to 10 years.

Hutchison Whampoa is a leading international corporation which has five core businesses – ports and related services, telecommunications, property and hotels, retail and manufacturing, and energy and infrastructure.

## Hammer Falls on First Land-use Auction

By James Liu

The city's first land-use rights auction was held on Monday at the Beijing International Hotel, with ten real estate companies bidding for approximately 444,300 square meters of land in Daxing District.

Bidding began at 430 million yuan and ended with Sunco Real Estate's offer of 905 million yuan, edging out major developers Beijing Tianhong Group and China Resources Land. Sunco Group, established in 1994, is confident about the future development potential of this land, according to a company representative who declined to give his name.

Shen Baochang, secretary of the district committee of the CPC, expressed satisfaction with the result.

In the past, acquisition of land-use rights was approved by relevant govern-

ment departments, however the practice has changed since the issuing of a regulation by the Ministry of Land and Resources on April 3, 2002. The regulation stipulates that the acquisition of state owned land use rights of land should be carried out by public bidding, auction or public listing.

Introducing public management on state-owned land will help prevent the illegal operation of land investment and provide an open and fair environment for investors, said Ye Xiangzhong, director of Beijing Municipal Land Regulation and Reserve Center. "The successful bidding will help boost the land market next year," Ye said.

The Tianjin-based Sunco Group is the largest real estate agency in that city, holding 30 percent of the market share for used housing, and with 100 chain stores and almost 200 community cooperative stores.

## Six Billion Yuan for National Oil Reserve

By Zhao Hongyi

A budget of 6 billion yuan has been scheduled by the State Development and Reform Commission (SDRC) for the establishment of the long discussed national strategic oil reserves, according to a report in *Beijing Youth Daily* on November 29.

Jiang Weixin, vice minister of the SDRC revealed at a seminar last Friday in Beijing that four reserves will be set up as the first part of the national strategic oil reserves. For this, Jiang's commission has set up an office under the department of energy to specifically supervise the progress.

The four reserves will be built at Zhanghai and Hangzhou bays in Zhejiang, Huang Dao (Yellow Island) in Shandong and Guang-

dong's Daya Bay.

"Cost of transportation and storage are the main considerations for us to choose the coastal four sites," explained Jiang, "We will use the natural caves as the bases for construction." Principally, the total reserve volume should be no less than one quarter of the national annual consumption, or at least 50 million tons.

Analysts are still waiting for clarification on a number of critical points, such as under what circumstance the reserves can be used.

"We need stringent regulations, and perhaps new laws," said an oil industry expert who declined to give his name in an interview with *Beijing Youth Daily*.

## Government Procurement to Reach 200 Billion in 2004

By James Liu

China has set the goal for government procurement at 200 billion yuan for next year, said deputy director of the Ministry of Finance's treasury department, Zhou Chengyue, last Friday.

"The actual volume is likely to reach 220 billion yuan," Zhou said at a training course on government procurement held in Beijing. This year, the target is 150 billion yuan, and by September, the procurement volume had surpassed 90 billion yuan. "As the fourth quarter is the season for government procurement, the total volume might exceed the planned figure," Zhou said.

Zhou revealed that China's government procurement next year will focus on engineering projects, including projects in the fields of public facilities, green- ing and office buildings, a shift from goods

and services that has dominated government procurement in past years. China first introduced the government procurement system in 1996, and the volume has been growing steadily since then.

"Although government procurement mainly targets domestic products, imported products make up a considerable proportion of it. Imported products are needed because Chinese enterprises are still incapable of making such products at present, like sophisticated cameras for reporters," said the official.

Acknowledging that government procurement in China still has much room for growth, he said the volume of the country's government procurement in 2002 accounted for less than one percent of its gross domestic product, much lower than the average level of 10-15 percent in developed countries.

(Continued from page 1)  
More than a legal issue

"What I am really concerned about is how the Chinese staff's legal rights are to be protected in foreign owned and joint venture companies. If the workers' union cannot protect its workers, who will be able to do so? Doesn't the workers' union stand for the workers and stand for their basic legal rights?" said Tang. In his opinion, if he is able to be removed, it would suggest there is some weakness in the law governing workers' unions.

A legal expert familiar with the workers' union law, who requested anonymity, told *Beijing Today* that there were fewer labor disputes in some developed countries, "because the degree of effectiveness of the law lies in the understanding of the people who administer it and benefit from it."

He conceded that, like any other laws, the workers' union law has certain weaknesses. "For example, although the law says any act of reprisal by a company against a committee member of a workers' union must be corrected, there is no specific explanation as to what kind of action by the company can be regarded as reprisal," he said.

Since the labor market in China is a buyer's market, he pointed out, the power of a workers' union is certain to be affected. "The more open and competitive the labor market, the greater the influence," he said. "Workers usually have to endure their rights being violated if they do not want to lose their jobs. In other words, ordinary workers have less bargaining power in strongly competitive markets."

For a company workers' union, the main task is protecting the legal rights of its members. At higher levels, the legal rights of the chairman of a company workers' union must also be protected. "Otherwise no one would dare to speak out for the ordinary staff, and the rights of the ordinary staff would never be protected," he said.

### Foreign Banks Ok'd to Sell RMB Bonds

By Hou Mingxin

China will allow overseas banks to issue renminbi-denominated bonds, it was announced at a press conference last Thursday.

The decision is expected to make it much easier for foreign banks to raise local currency for loans to overseas and domestic companies.

Guo Shuqing, director of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, said that the central government will select certain international financial institutions to issue renminbi bonds for the first time in China's mainland.

The move will help foreign lenders, till now only allowed to provide renminbi services to Chinese enterprises, to build up their renminbi capital reserves to serve a wider range of clients amid the country's opening up of its financial markets.

China pledged in its agreement to the World Trade Organization that it would permit overseas banks to provide renminbi services to individual local clients by December 11, 2006.

### Private Bank Prepares for Overseas IPO

By Zhao Hongyi

China Minsheng Banking Corporation, the only privately-owned commercial bank operating in the mainland, announced plans for an initial public offering in Hong Kong on December 9. The move will make it only the second bank after the Bank of China to be publicly listed on an overseas stock market.

Under the initiative, Minsheng will issue H-shares at the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in the first half of next year. H-shares refer to those Hong Kong-listed ventures registered in the mainland with overseas investment, thus enjoying a higher market expectation and demand.

Established in January, 1996, Minsheng issued A-shares, shares targeted at domestic investors, on the Shanghai Stock Exchange at the end of 2000. Last October, the International Financial Corporation, the investing arm of the International Monetary Fund, acquired 1.7 percent shares of the bank

By June 30 this year, the bank had total assets of 329.8 billion yuan, which are expected to increase to 600 billion, ranking it within the biggest hundred banks worldwide.

### New Regulation on Housing Compensation

By James Liu

The Ministry of Construction issued new guidelines on relocation compensation assessment on December 1. The guidelines, which take effect on January 1, state that the level of compensation paid to residents of apartments and houses slated for demolition should be decided by the market, and that compensation standards must be publicized seven days prior to the demolition. It also gives householders the option to appeal if they are not satisfied with the remuneration offered.

The majority of the problems that come up in the process of relocating people whose homes are to be demolished are related to compensation standards. According to the law, any civil contracts pertaining to restitution should be based on the principles of free will and equality.

In this respect, even when the government intervenes in or directly carries out relocation projects in the public interest, citizens' property rights over their homes should be respected and reasonable compensation paid.

The newly released guidelines state that the exact compensation figure should be calculated by an independent house appraisal organization.

### First Chinese Travel Company Listed on Nasdaq

By Xiao Shan

Shanghai-based travel website Ctrip.com International saw its share value jump by 89 percent on Tuesday when it made its initial public offering (IPO) on the US Nasdaq exchange, debuting at US \$18.

Ctrip.com is China's first travel company and seventh IT company to be listed on the Nasdaq, and follows IPOs by Chinese portal websites, Netease, Sohu and Sina in the US stock market.

On the same day, Sina announced its acquisition of another Shanghai travel website Fortunetrip.com.

Merrill Lynch, Ctrip.com's lead underwriter, began selling 4.2 million American depositary shares in the Chinese site to US investors on Tuesday.

Ctrip claims to be China's largest website handling air ticket and hotel reservations. It raised a total of US \$18 million in earlier rounds from IDG, Softbank, Carlyle, Morningside, Orchid. The company began turning a profit from October 2001.

### Demand Growing for Individual Finance Services

By A Du / Zhao Hongyi

As personal incomes increasing more rapidly than ever in China, demand for individual and tailored financial investment services are soaring.

Dang Xiuli, general manager for individual finance services at China Merchant Bank's Beijing Branch says, "market demands are always running faster than we can launch our new products."

Dang was addressing more than 200 counterparts from 70 financial institutions of banking, insurance, securities and funds management at the 2003 *Beijing Youth Daily* Financial Industrial Summit on December 5 in Beijing.

"More clients are interested in insurance products, believing they are the best investment tools," said Cai Ying, a senior official for corporate image promotion from New China Life Insurance.

But some scholars disagree. "Businesspeople have boasted about their products too much," said Li Xiaolin, of the Central University of Finance and Economics. "Our customers need to know that the basic function of insurance products is security and that any investment has risks, as well as benefits."

**Law Firm Jones Day Opens Beijing Office**

Leading international law firm Jones Day announced the formal opening of its Beijing office on December 4, the company's second in China's mainland after its Shanghai office, which opened in 1999. Jones Day is the only international law firm with offices in the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Managing partner Stephen Brogan came to Beijing to preside over the opening ceremony, which was held at the Great Hall of the People. Partner-in-charge at the Beijing office, Johnson Tan, was this year named one of Asia's leading lawyers in dispute resolution by Asia Law.

The new office is located in the World Trade Center.

## Bear Market Deals Heavy Blow to Securities Brokers

By Zhao Hongyi

For the 131 domestic securities brokering firms, 2003 has been a long-lasting nightmare, according to analysts, who predict an adjustment of this service sector is inevitable in the year to come.

Due to the bear market performance of domestic stock markets so far this year, 98 of the 131 securities brokering firms have seen a total of 4.1 billion yuan deficit in the first three quarters, while the remaining 29 achieved a total of 700 million yuan profits. Net profit for the sector is negative 3.4 billion yuan. This means an average income of 300,000 yuan only for each of the 2,800 securities brokering outlets nationwide.

"Last year, we had only 65 firms in deficit and 60 profitable firms," commented an industry observer.

The depressed market has caused at least 1 billion yuan in losses on investments made by these firms on behalf of their customers.

Job and salary cuts have become the first option for survival. The sector has cut the number of staff by half and salaries by two thirds, to an average of 2,000 yuan per month.

The stronger brokers are searching for

new channels to finance. Shanghai-based Shenyn Wanguo has applied to the China Securities Regulation Commission for a license to issue bonds.

Others are exploring new business in new markets. Overseas markets are the new battlefields, such as the Hong Kong stock market. Many of those based in Guangdong have focused their investment business in Hong Kong's H-shares transactions on behalf of their mainland customers.

More firms are helping privately owned domestic ventures prepare for possible overseas IPOs. Despite not being qualified to arrange such offerings, the firms are acting as go-betweens, packaging the ventures and recommending them to the IPO arrangers for consideration.

Analysts believe mergers and consolidations in the sector are inevitable in the coming year. The second trend is that overseas investment will start purchasing the brokers, or forming joint ventures. The problem for the brokers suffering the most is to package themselves well in order to attract potential overseas partners. The third trend is that more and more brokers are creating and offering innovative and customer-tailored services.



# Zimbabwe Pulls Out

Abuja, Nigeria, December 7 (AP) – A defiant Zimbabwe withdrew from the Commonwealth of Britain and its former colonies on Sunday, hours after the 54-nation bloc upheld its 18-month suspension of the southern African nation for alleged abuses of civil liberties.

“It’s quits, and quits it will be,” President Robert Mugabe’s government said in a statement from Zimbabwe.

In a major defeat for Zimbabwe’s leader, Commonwealth heads of state had declared earlier Sunday that Mugabe’s outcast status would stand until he made demanded human rights and democratic reforms.

The suspension was imposed last year after Mugabe was widely accused of using force and fraud to steal re-election, maintaining his more than two-decade rule of the troubled southern African nation.

The Commonwealth accord on Zimbabwe had averted a threatened public rift between Western and developing nations in the group, whose members represent nearly one-third of the world’s six billion people.

The ban also appeared to maintain Zimbabwe’s pariah status, although Commonwealth leaders insisted they were anxious to re-engage the nation to help bring about change.

In its statement, Mugabe’s government insisted it would accept nothing short of full reinstatement.

“Anything you agree on Zimbabwe which is short of this position, no matter how sweetly worded, means Zimbabwe is still a subject of the Commonwealth. This is unacceptable,” the statement said.

In Abuja, Nigeria, site of a four-day Commonwealth summit dominated by Zimbabwe, Commonwealth officials expressed dismay.

“It is not something the Commonwealth wanted,” bloc spokesman Joel Kibazo told *The Associated Press* early Monday, calling Zimbabwe’s pullout “disappointing news.”

“This was supposed to be seen as a way forward, not a way backward,” Kibazo said, saying Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon was concerned that Zimbabwe “not ... isolate itself further” from the international community.

Zimbabwe’s announcement made good on Mugabe’s repeated threat to yank his increasingly troubled southern African nation out of the Commonwealth unless it lifted its ban.

Commonwealth chiefs insisted their move Sunday was the start of re-engaging with Zimbabwe – as several of the bloc’s African and developing world leaders had urged.

At the same time, British Prime Minister Tony Blair called extension of the suspension “a strong signal” to Mugabe. Calling the Zimbabwe debate “a test

of our commitment to democracy,” Blair said, referring to the suspension, “In the end, it was the right outcome.”

Yet Canadian officials termed it a “compromise” solution and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, host of the Commonwealth summit, said he hoped the decision would get the process of “lifting of Zimbabwe’s suspension started.”

Under the Commonwealth’s agreement, Obasanjo had been charged with monitoring Zimbabwe on behalf of the bloc, reporting back to a six-nation suspension-review panel if and when he saw signs of improvement.

Nigeria’s leader had said he planned to visit Zimbabwe himself to meet government and opposition officials to determine whether real changes were being made.

Banned from the bloc and its summit, Mugabe had accused Western leaders of creating an “unholy alliance” to oppose him. (Glenn McKenzie)

## Analyst’s Take:

*The Commonwealth is derived from the British Empire. It has 54 member countries, 19 of which are in Africa, and a population of 1.8 billion. Except Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the rest are developing countries.*

*Throughout history, the Commonwealth has cancelled the memberships of a number of countries like Pakistan,*

*Nigeria and Fiji and reinstated them afterwards. Zimbabwe is not the first, nor will it be the last.*

*Britain needs the Commonwealth because it is a platform to exercise influence on world affairs and maintain its status as a world power. It is a good mechanism to keep up the economic interests inherited from the colonial era in member countries, promoting multinational companies’ business activities and trade in raw materials and industrial products.*

*The developing member countries also need the Commonwealth. Because it does not recognize any government established by coups or in turmoil, it helps maintain stability in smaller countries. It also provides a platform for the small countries’ voices to be heard in the world community, and provides economic assistance that is critical in the more fragile economies.*

*Winston Churchill listed three foundations for British diplomacy after the Second World War: Europe, America, and the Commonwealth. Britain is quite flexible in managing the organization in order to maintain its operation. Therefore, whether or not Zimbabwe comes back, the Commonwealth will continue to function.*

– **Zhang Shunhong, Institute of World History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences**

## Asia-Pacific Cheers Scrapping of US Steel Tariffs

Tokyo, December 7 (AFP) – Asia-Pacific countries hailed US President George W. Bush’s decision to lift tariffs on steel imports as a vindication for fair trade rules. The tariffs had been deemed illegal by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Japan led the chorus of cheers saying it was pleased with the decision but cautioned it would keep a close watch on US monitoring of steel imports, which it warned could be used to protect the US steel sector.

New Zealand said the US decision to abandon the tariffs was a victory for New Zealand and the WTO while South Korea said it would help to facilitate free trade.

The US decision came in response to a successful challenge through the WTO dispute settlement system by eight countries including Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and China.

Bush announced Thursday he would rescind the tariffs. He had had little choice after the WTO ruled last month that they were illegal and major trading partners vowed massive retaliation.

China, for its part, made no comment Friday on the US change of heart, although it applauded the WTO ruling last month that US steel tariffs violated global trading rules.

New Zealand Trade Negotiations Minister Jim Sutton said the US decision was “a victory for New Zealand and the rules-based system which the WTO represents”.

## Local Media Reports:

*We welcome the US decision to scrap the steel import tariffs. As long as the US takes actions in this regard, China will withdraw the threatened retaliation measures. But we’ll still keep a close eye on the issue as the US indicates it will use import quotas and anti-dumping regulations to monitor and regulate steel imports.*

*In addition, we are sorry to say the US is increasing anti-dumping cases against imports from China, from textiles, bras, and TV sets to furniture.*

– **Chong Quan, spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce**

*I come here not for “trade wars”. We should have a long-term view of bilateral trade development and problems. We can solve trade disputes by further expanding our bilateral trade volumes. There is no need to use retaliation and sanctions here and there. Last but not least, we should not bring political differences into our trade disputes.*

– **Wen Jiabao, Chinese Premier, at a meeting of the American Bankers Association, December 8**



Radio City Rockettes hold puppies from the North Shore Animal League America before the Christmas Show backstage at Radio City Music Hall December 10, 2003 in New York. The Rockettes are encouraging people to adopt one of the hundreds of animal orphans and give them a home for the holidays.

Photo by Photocom



## French Supermarket Tycoon Dies in Plane Crash

London, December 7 (AFP) – A principal shareholder in the French supermarket giant Carrefour and his wife were killed when their light aircraft crashed in Oxfordshire, a source close to his family said.

Paul-Louis Halley, 69, one of the main shareholders in the world’s second largest retailer, died along with his wife Annick, 63, and the pilot of the plane.

French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin paid tribute to Halley, whom he described in a statement as “a brilliant figure in the world of French business.”

According to Thames Valley police, the single-engine propeller plane, which took off earlier in the day from Brussels, crashed into a field just meters from a main road while attempting to land at Kidlington airport near Oxford.

Halley, a father of three, was named by *Forbes* magazine as one of the 10 richest people in France.

Carrefour declined to comment on the plane crash.

## India Plans New Economic Zones

Singapore, December 7 (Dow Jones) – The Indian government is planning to permit the creation of 26 special economic zones and a law allowing the move could be pushed through as an executive order as soon as January or February, the *Financial Times* reports.

India’s Minister for Trade and Commerce Arun Jaitley said in an interview with the UK paper that the government will have six months to get the executive order ratified in parliament.

India’s opposition parties are likely to oppose the measure, because investors in the zones would benefit from a much diluted version of the country’s strict labor laws. But Jaitley said economic reforms were becoming increasingly popular with the Indian electorate and “issues such as this are becoming less and less controversial.”

“Over the last two or three years, the advantages of economic reform have been felt across many constituencies inside India,” he said.

Last week, the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party and its allies won dramatic victories in a critical round of state assembly elections. The verdicts have been interpreted as a mandate for further reform.

If pushed through, the measure could prove popular with foreign companies. Under existing regulations, companies with more than 100 employees must seek the permission of the state government if they wish to reduce the size

of their labor force. Usually this isn’t forthcoming.

## Analyst’s Take:

*In India, the biggest obstacles to economic development and opening up are the democratic system, with its endless discussions on economic projects and initiatives, and the rich elites who worry that their interests will be taken over by foreign competitors. This explains why India has achieved less progress than China since it adopted economic reforms in the late 1980s.*

*India is learning from China, trying to speed up the pace. But that does not mean India is taking exactly the same road. For instance, India is developing high tech industries, such as telecommunications, bio-engineering and software as the forerunners instead of China’s foreign investment-based labor-intensive industries.*

*Conflicts of interest are inevitable in the next 15-20 years between the two countries, particularly in economic, trade and technological frontlines.*

*The conflicts will be reflected in areas such as border disputes and influence in Southeast and Central Asia.*

*But conflicts do not always mean clashes. Considering that national security is badly needed for economic development in the two countries, both of them will maintain their self-restraint in dealing with each other.*

– **Zhang Shiqi, Chinese Institute for Contemporary International Relations Studies**

## Belgium Takes Action on “Hitler wine”

Brussels, December 5 (Reuters) – Belgium’s Center for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism says it is preparing legal action to stop imports of an Italian wine with labels depicting Adolf Hitler and other leading Nazis.

“A picture of Adolf Hitler is in itself too little (to trigger legal action), but he’s also doing the Hitler salute and there is this message ‘One People, One Empire, One Leader (Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer)’,” Ingrid Aendenboom, spokeswoman for the center, told Reuters on Friday.

The German government asked Italy in September to investigate whether the labels violated European Union anti-racism rules.

## Japan Takes on China in ASEAN

Tokyo, December 11 (Reuters) – Japan agreed on Thursday to start free trade talks with Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines in an attempt to counteract China’s growing influence in Asia.

The trade talks should begin in early 2004, statements issued after the meetings said, but they did not set a deadline for sealing a deal, saying only that talks should be concluded “within a reasonable period of time.”

China signed a pact setting a framework for talks on free trade agreements with the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) last year, a deal Japan scurried to imitate this October. (Elaine Lies)

## Japan’s Reserves – High

Tokyo, December 6 (The Japan Times) – Japan’s foreign-exchange reserves hit a fresh record of \$644.57 billion in November.

It is \$18.3 billion higher from October, mainly due to the yen-selling intervention by the monetary authority in the currency market, the Finance ministry said Friday.

The foreign-exchange reserves consist of securities and deposits denominated in foreign currencies plus International Monetary Fund reserve positions, IMF special drawing rights and gold.

## FDA Will Not Regulate GloFish



Washington, December 10 (Reuters) – The US Food and Drug Administration, besieged by questions about a new kind of genetically engineered pet fish, said on Tuesday it saw no need to regulate the red fluorescent creatures.

A Texas-based company has started distributing the glowing zebra fish under the trademark name GloFish, but some media reports question their safety. They carry a gene from a sea coral that makes them shine red, especially under ultraviolet light.

“Because tropical aquarium fish are not used for food purposes, they pose no threat to the food supply,” the FDA said in a terse statement.

(PR News Photo via Reuters)

## Fed Keeps Rate at 45-Year Low

Washington, December 9 (AP) – The Federal Reserve left a key interest rate at a 45-year low on Tuesday and pledged anew to keep rates down for a “considerable period.”

The Fed in its statement said that it was leaving the federal funds rate, the interest that banks charge on overnight loans, at 1 percent, where it has been since the last rate change, a quarter-point cut last June.

However, Wall Street investors didn’t like hints from the Fed that the period of easy money may be drawing to a close, even if the first rate hikes are still months away.

(Martin Crutsinger)



By James Liu

Japan's largest carmaker, Toyota, is withdrawing two advertisements from domestic media for its China-made luxury sports utility vehicles (SUVs) amid a fury of protests that they are offensive. The company issued an official apology for the ads on December 4.

The ads, for the new Prado GX and Land Cruiser SUVs, drew widespread indignation and criticism in China for being deliberate insults to national feelings.

Beijing-based *Auto Fan* magazine ran the two advertisements in its December issue. One depicted two stone lions, popular Chinese cultural symbols, saluting and bowing to a Land Cruiser Prado model. The Prado tag was translated as *Badao* in Chinese, which means "high-handed" or "domineering," and the slogan on the ad read, "You have to respect Badao."

The other ad showed a Toyota Land Cruiser tugging a heavy-duty truck over the Tibetan highlands. Though the brand of truck being towed was unspecified, many said it looked like a Jiefang-brand truck built by Chinese automaker First Automotive Works Corp (FAW).

Critics have attacked the first ad on the grounds that the stone lions look like those carved on the Marco Polo Bridge, where Japanese troops launched the full-scale invasion of China in 1937 and a potent symbol of national humiliation to many Chinese. The second ad was assailed because some people felt that the vehicle being towed looked like a Chinese military vehicle, perhaps implying that Japanese SUVs are more durable than Chinese army issue trucks.

Public anger towards Japan, linked to Japan's occupation of China in the

# Toyota Recalls 'Offensive' Ads in China



The offending ads were created by a Chinese advertising agency. Photo provided by Auto Fan

years preceding and during World War II, is easily aroused in this country. Anti-Japanese sentiment has been simmering since August, when 42 people in northeastern China fell ill and one died after unearthing chemical weapons left behind by the Japanese army. That tragic event was followed by the uncovering of a massive orgy involving more than 400 Japanese male tourists and hundreds of Chinese prostitutes in

Zhuhai from September 16 to 18 and the anniversary of an attack by Japanese forces in 1931, all of which have drummed up inflammatory anti-Japanese rhetoric around this country, particularly on the Internet.

The Industrial and Commercial Administrative Bureau of Xicheng District has launched an investigation to determine whether the advertisements are technically illegal. "If they have the

effect of hurting national feelings, it would be considered a violation of the advertisement publication code," a bureau official told *Beijing Youth Daily*. If pronounced illegal, the ads would be banned and Toyota could be fined.

After the stir, *Auto Fan* magazine published a letter on its website apologizing to its readers for any offense. A representative of Shengshi Changcheng Ads Company, the Chinese advertising agency that designed the Toyota ads, told *Beijing Youth Daily* that the firm had no intention of insulting anyone. That representative, surnamed Du, said her agency was cooperating with the Industrial and Commercial Administrative Bureau in its investigation.

It has yet to be seen whether the ad debacle will influence sales of Toyota products in this country.

Some Chinese have come out publicly against the anger towards the ads, saying many people have been too sensitive in their interpretations of the ads' meaning. Many web surfers have expressed opinions similar to those of one who wrote, "Statues of lions can be found in many other countries. They are not necessarily symbols of China."

The following is the full text of Toyota's letter of apology on its website in Chinese:

*Toyota Motor Corp. sincerely apologizes for any unpleasant feelings that may have been caused among readers by the two ads for the Land Cruiser and Prado SUV. The two advertisements are solely commercial and had no other intent.*

*Toyota has stopped running both ads. Toyota will continue to provide its Chinese consumers with the most satisfactory goods and services and hopes to receive the support of Chinese consumers.*

## Serial Killer Sentenced to Death

By Chen Ying

After a brief three-and-a-half hour public trial on Tuesday, the Zhumadian Intermediate People's Court in Henan Province found Huang Yong guilty of kidnapping 18 young people and killing 17 of them since September 2001, and sentenced him to death.

More than 300 people attended the trial and another nearly 2,000 stood outside the court, waiting to hear the verdict.

*Beijing Today* first reported on the shocking murders on November 21. Huang, 29, a resident of Zengzhuang Village in Pingyu County, was put into detention on November 12 after his last victim managed to escape and went to the local police. He was formally arrested 10 days later.

The Zengzhuang police had received many reports of missing young men over the two previous years, but never followed up with investigations.

Huang started the murder spree in autumn of 2001, using a retooled noodle-making machine as his weapon of choice. He prowled local Internet cafes, game houses and cinemas for victims, luring teenage boys back to his home with promises of work opportunities or study help. Police have discovered that he then got the boys drunk and strangled them or tied them up before putting their bodies through the machine.

According to police records presented to the court during the trial, after his arrest Huang confessed, "I have wanted to be a murderer since I was a child, but I never had the chance to do it."

He got the chance to realize his bloody dreams after his family members left Zengzhuang to run a pig farm. "I couldn't kill women, because that would not show my strength and boldness, and I couldn't kill older men because they are more cautious. So I had to kill those inexperienced teenagers," Huang reportedly told the police.

Before the trial, the parents of the victims waived their rights to seek civil compensation from Huang, as there was no way his poor family could afford such payments.

However, the victims' families are still seeking compensation from related authorities. "If they sued Huang, they wouldn't have been able to file other litigation," Zhou Jinglin, the lawyer representing the families in their civil case told *Beijing Youth Daily* after the trial.

"We hope local administrations will carefully oversee Internet cafes, game houses and other places teenagers like to go. They should think about their own behavior and accept responsibility," said Lu Dequan, father of Lu Ningbo, Huang's first victim.

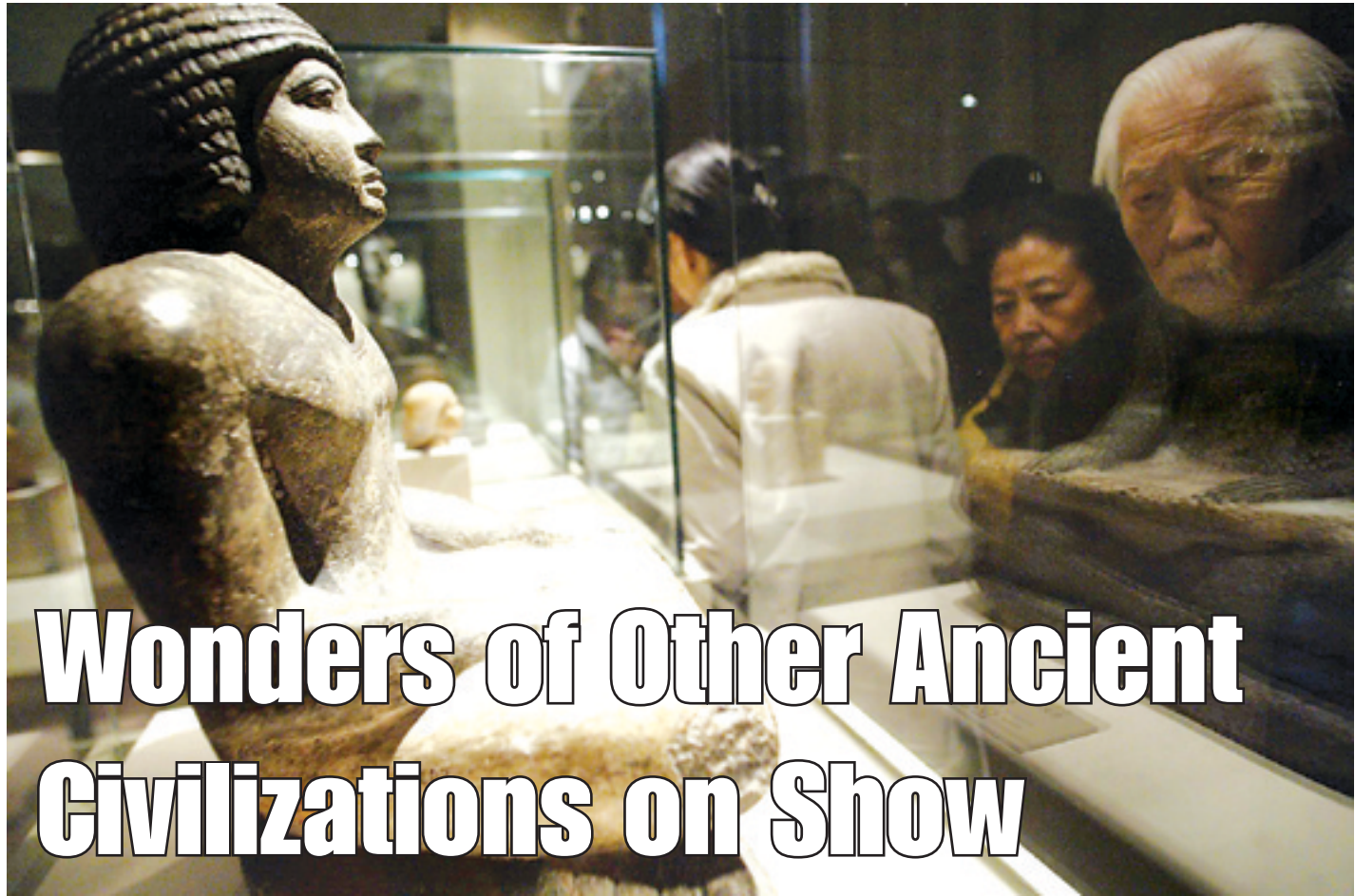
## Blenz Opens at Canada Embassy

By Xiao Shan

On Wednesday, Canadian coffeehouse chain Blenz Coffee opened a new "coffee corner" on the grounds of the Canadian embassy and celebrated by offering a half price promotion to embassy staff and friends.

Blenz entered the Beijing market this August by launching an outlet in the Oriental Malls in the Oriental Plaza complex on Chang'an Avenue. The company seems aimed at taking on coffee giant Starbucks, and has similar prices to its American rival.

Bai Ning, president of China Coffee Holding, the agent of Blenz China, told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday his company plans to expand Blenz's local presence through franchising, adding that another two coffee shops would be opened in the capital by the end of this year.



# Wonders of Other Ancient Civilizations on Show

By Yi Yi

The opening of two shows surveying priceless artifacts of distant ancient civilizations, the exhibition of National Treasures from Egypt at the National Museum of China and the exhibition of Etruscan treasures at the China Millennium Monument Museum, drew unusually large crowds of museum-goers over the past week.

Visitors to the National Museum show, which opened last Friday, are greeted by a two-meter-tall, solemn looking statue of

the pharaoh Akhenaten, one of the key pieces in the collection of the National Museum of Egypt. The whole show is comprised of 143 artifacts, including many pieces that shine light on religion and everyday life in ancient Egypt. Highlights include several statues of pharaohs, gods and goddesses in bronze, stone and gold, as well as some elegant jewelry crafted from gold and precious stones.

It is the first time for these artifacts, which have an estimated total insured value of \$260 million, to be taken outside of

Egypt. The show runs until January 5, and to meet demand, the National Museum has extended its open hours until 8 pm.

The Millennium Monument Museum's larger show, *Twilight of Rome* — Culture Relics from the Italian Etruscans, kicked off two days and will run until February 28. On display are 349 artifacts in gold, bronze, ivory, stone and pottery, ranging from weapons to women's accessories, that give a well-rounded portrayal of the Etruscan society of the ninth to second century BC.

Photo by Lily

## Drunken Diplomat Rams Parked Bus

By Chen Ying

A drunken foreign diplomat drove his white Nissan car into the back of a minibus parked alongside the road near Dongfengqiao on the East Fourth Ring Road twice at around 3:30 pm on Monday, according to the *Beijing Times*.

"There were four people in the minibus. First, we all felt the bus jolt and shake violently, and then it happened again before we could do anything," the driver of the bus, surnamed Liu, told the paper.

According to another witness, a Mr. Li, the white Nissan was driving fast when it suddenly swerved onto a sidewalk and rear-ended the minibus. The car reversed and then ran into the

minibus again. Then a foreigner emerged from the car and entered a nearby building.

About 10 minutes later, the man returned. Liu recalled, "He was drunk, and there was vomit on his clothes. He would have driven away again if we didn't prevent him from doing so."

There was no license plate on the Nissan and when the police arrived and asked the man to show them his drivers' license or ID card, he said he was not carrying them. He introduced himself as a diplomat and refused to get out of his car. Later, the municipal traffic administration confirmed the man's diplomatic status, but did not disclose any more information. The case is still under investigation.



## Christmas Goes Overboard

By Su Wei

Photo by Geng Lei

A 1.7-meter-tall Christmas tree got a frosty reception at the Wonders of Coral Reefs pool in the Beijing Aquarium on Thursday afternoon when it was plunged into the aquarium's waters as a festive display of holiday spirit. The turtles and sea fish in the pool immediately fled from the artificial tree, but then slowly approached it, or even touched it, in apparent curiosity.

"The tree was specially made so that it would not decay underwater nor be poisonous to the sea creatures," said Yu Ping, an employee in the aquarium's public relations office. "We couldn't hang up a lot of normal decorations on the tree because we were afraid the fish would eat them before Christmas Day."



Ke Shouliang

Photo by Hu Jinxi



# Can Safety Be Bought?

## Installed satellite tracking system saves taxi driver from danger

By Wang Xiaodong / Chen Ying  
Modern security technology saved a taxi driver from being robbed last month, according to multiple reports in local newspapers.

Wang Yong (pseudonym) was driving in the area of Lizeqiao near the West Third Ring Road at 4 pm on November 17 when a man in his forties got into the taxi. According to Wang, the man did not immediately say where he wanted to go and kept his right hand inside his coat pocket until suddenly he tried to wrest control of the steering wheel.

Wang responded by pulling back on the wheel with one hand and using the other to press a button on the GPS (global positioning system) tracking and security system installed on the car dashboard. The system immediately sent an alarm signal to operator Beijing Qihua Communications and monitors at the company's control center were able to pinpoint the location of Wang's car.

Qihua operators switched on their emergency monitoring equipment, called the police and tried to contact Wang through the cab's two-way radio. The robber leapt from the car when that call came through and jumped into another taxi heading the opposite direction. Wang pursued and called Qihua's center to report the attempted robbery. Eventually, he lost the robber when he ran into a narrow hutong. Lo-

cal police are still investigating the case.

The incident has been called an example of the usefulness of high-tech security systems like the GPS tracker in Wang's car. According to the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau, about 10,000 local taxis now carry such GPS systems, which have helped prevent several hundred crimes.

Personal security is a rising field and industry in China, though many people seem reluctant to purchase security products and related services. Is it reasonable to spend a good deal of money on personal security? Opinions follow:

### What is the function of the security industry?

**Yang Ying**, director of the Security Technology Protection Management Office, Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau

It's important to understand two concepts about the market economy, security responsibility socialization and security commercialization, in order to define the security industry.

For a long time, people considered security the government's responsibility, but that has changed under the market economy, giving rise to a security industry and making security the responsibility of society.

Harnessing high technology is particularly useful to strength-

**If a family installs a company's security system and an emergency occurs, to what degree should the company get involved? If the system has problems, or if the family does not know how to use it, they might blame the local public security bureau for responding slowly. In such a case, who would be responsible? How should companies be punished if security systems issue false alarms? These kinds of issues need to be addressed and licenses should be standardized.**

— Yang Ying

ening public security. For example, more than 10,000 vehicles were stolen in 2001, but only several hundred were stolen last year, partly as a result of people using high tech security systems. The more people install such systems, the better public security will be and the safer and happier people will feel.

**Yu Lingyun**, professor, Law Department of Chinese People's Public Security University

Public resources are limited, so it is not enough to depend on government funds and management to maintain public order and security. How should citizens' safety be protected? Certainly, police forces should deter crime, but there are still blind spots where police patrols are not effective. Therefore, it's a good idea to use social resources to provide police with information. From this point of view, developing the security industry will help make up for the limited public resources for security.

**Jin Xiufeng**, secretary-general, China Security and Protection Industry Association

It's time to change generally-held ideas about public security. Related administrations should shift their work modes from simple control to providing services. The development of the security industry would not only free up some of the police force, but could also promote the reform of the public security system. People

will soon realize that maintaining public security is not only the government's duty, it is also theirs.

### Is it reasonable to spend a lot of money on security?

**Yang Ying:**

Economic development has led to a proliferation of security products on the market. To date, many people just want to buy locks to keep their homes safe, but I don't think that means they are against spending money on their safety, they're just keeping it at a low level. Wealthy people may need more complicated services to ensure their security. Different people have different requirements and expectations, and different levels of safety can be purchased for different amounts of money.

**Jin Xiufeng:**

People already spend money on safety, such as buying good *fangdaomen* (burglarproof doors), but they've been slow to spend on security services. This means people need some instruction. Security services should adopt the police's work modes and let people and companies know about the benefits of their services.

### How should the development of this industry be regulated and promoted?

**Yu Lingyun:**

Nineteen provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities

have set regional regulations about using advanced technologies for security, but there have been some problems. First, local government management is inconsistent because of differences in management modes between officials and public security departments. Plus, there are no specific regulations that define the range of public security departments' duties and management scope, so their legal responsibilities are not clear.

Local protectionism has also created difficulties for this new industry, so it's time to establish uniform laws for its development.

**Yang Ying:**

Two key problems need to be solved urgently — the legal scope of government administration and the industry's status, meaning its rights and responsibilities.

If a family installs a company's security system and an emergency occurs, to what degree should the company get involved? If the system has problems, or if the family does not know how to use it, they might blame the local public security bureau for responding slowly. In such a case, who would be responsible? How should companies be punished if security systems issue false alarms? These kinds of issues need to be addressed and licenses should be standardized.

## Readers & Leaders

## New Chapter in China-US Relations

By Shida Zhu

China and the United States are two great nations facing each other across the expanse of the Pacific Ocean. One boasts an ancient civilization and the world's largest population, the other the most powerful economy on earth. Their relations will have a significant bearing on the future of the world.

On December 7, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao arrived in the US for an official visit, the success of which will have important repercussions on continuing relations between the two countries.

Of all the factors that govern bilateral relations, economics is the most decisive. Sino-American trade amounted to US \$74.4 billion in 2001 and US \$97.2 billion in 2003, and 40% of Chinese exports go to the US. China is the third largest source of American imports and its seventh largest export destination.

America is the biggest investor in Chi-

na and the country's political stability and tremendous market potential are becoming the main forces attracting that capital. Any fluctuations in Sino-American economic relations will have impact on global trade and financial markets and on their political and diplomatic decisions.

Strategically speaking, China and the US share many common interests. In handling relations with North Korea, the issue of nuclear non-proliferation and the stability of Northeast Asia and the Asian-Pacific region, the US needs China's assistance and power of influence. In the US' war on international terrorism, which has entrenched it deeply in Iraq and made it open to threats of attacks from invisible enemies, it needs all the friends and allies it can get. China and the US are both unequivocally opposed to international terrorism and have grounds to build up mutual trust on this issue, which may serve as a turning point for

better Sino-US relations.

On the issue of Taiwan, the most sensitive question in bilateral relations, China demands that the US strictly observe the principles of the three communiqués signed between the governments of the two countries that recognize only one China and Taiwan is part of China's territory.

While cultural factors play a vital role in bilateral relations, significant differences can lead and have led to misunderstandings. Therefore, it is imperative to promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

In the wake of 9•11, America has tightened its control on immigration and adopted some measures that encroach upon civil liberties. This presents a major challenge on the home front. The US is confronting domestic and international pressures and needs friends. China and the US have the basis for cooperation and common interest.

China is expected to register 8.5 percent GDP growth rate this year, the fastest rate of economic growth in the world,

and the domestic economy is likely to expand at the same speed next year. With its population of 1.3 billion, maintaining a politically stable and economically thriving China is important to global peace and stability and in the interests of both governments.

Since diplomatic ties were reestablished, Sino-US relations have had their ups and downs. After an initial period of honeymooning, they quickly entered a period of consistent friction. However, each crisis has led to the improvement of relations. In my research, I have found that Chinese hold very positive feelings about the Americans, to the point that I would say that many Chinese, especially the elite, have an America complex. In its relations with China, the US must give full consideration to the national sentiments of the Chinese and Chinese traditional culture. Mutual respect is key.

Contradictions and differences between Chinese and American cultures are the main causes of conflicts between the two nations. Both need to squarely

face and make rational judgments about these cultural differences. While China and the US may complement the other in substantial economic terms, they need to compromise on cultural matters. Though there may be conflicts in bilateral relations, such conflicts will not impede the long-term development of relations.

In the long run, as long as there are no substantial changes in economic conditions and other key factors, and the US strictly observes the three Sino-American communiqués, Sino-US relations should remain strong though there will likely be occasional conflicts of ideas and practices between the two.

(The writer is the senior research fellow of the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.)

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**'When I am dead, my children will be taken in by others. So, I want to do something to take care of others' children for as long as I can.'**

# All My Children

By Zeng Pengyu

In a part of China where people have become used to abandonment, Zhu Jinzhong is one of the few who is trying to make a difference. His village, Shuangmiao, is one of the villages in Henan to have been devastated by Aids following the mass donation of blood in carelessly run local clinics which spread HIV throughout the local population. Zhu also contracted the disease, but instead of just looking after himself, he has opened a home for some of the many children orphaned by the epidemic. Zhu's now providing a warm home for more than 50 children, but he fears the decline of his health and the day he will no longer be able to look after them.

On December 2, which was "World Aids Day", *Beijing Youth Daily* went to Zhu Jinzhong's home to see how Zhu and his "Aids orphans" are getting on.

## Opening the doors

Shuangmiao is in the east of Henan Province. Zhu, 37, used to work in construction and has a house consisting of one two-story building and a couple of other small buildings. In February this year, he decided to open up his home for local aids orphans. The youngest is five years old and the oldest is ten.

"I have taken in 53 children so far, 34 of whom have lost both of their parents. The others have lost either their father or mother but the remaining parent is infected and unable to look after them so they sent those children to me," said Zhu.

Zhu has two children of his own, one boy and one girl, living together with the rest of the children. When we arrived at lunchtime to interview Zhu, we saw 20 children having a meal together. Some girls were so shy that they hid themselves in the houses when they saw a stranger coming. Zhu pointed to the two buildings behind his home saying, "those buildings were changed into a canteen a few days ago. The children used to have to eat outside, but now it's becoming too cold."

The lunch the children were having seemed very meager: steamed bread and mushroom soup. When I asked one boy if it was good, he nodded and said: "it's like milk". Another boy laughed at him, saying "you've never had milk."

Looking at the children, Zhu sighed. "I have got so many children that I can only just feed all of them. I have to spend at least 100 yuan for daily meals and they're all growing up quickly."

## "Blood selling village"

Shuangmiao village was one of the areas in Henan where donating blood became popular in the early 1990s. Henan is one of the poorest provinces in China and after word began to spread that the authorities were offering money for blood donation, people became enthusiastic donors as they were able to earn more money this way than from



*This man needs some assistance.*

farming. The boom led to increasingly indiscriminate practices with "blood crooks" setting up numerous donor centers without any safety precautions.

From 1995, some people started becoming ill. It soon emerged they were suffering from Aids. "From 1997 until now, more than 140 people have died of this disease, many of them young people," said Wang, the village CPC secretary.

The disease didn't just affect those who caught it. Word spread in the local county and the village soon gained pariah status. The villagers found that no-one wanted their agricultural products any more, as fear spread. "The biggest problem was the children. If they hadn't got help and care from Zhu Jinzhong, they would become destitute," Wang added.

In 2001, Zhu himself tested HIV positive. "I started selling blood from 1994. My parents and my wife sold blood, too. Unfortunately, me and my parents were infected and only my wife tested HIV-negative," Zhu said.

Asked what made him decide to take in so many children, he explained simply, "When I am dead, my children will be taken in by others. So, I want to do something to take care of others' children for as long as I can."

## Sad stories

When news spread in the village that Zhu was willing to take in orphans, more and more children were brought to him, not only from his village but even from other counties.

Xiao Lei (pseudonym), who is 10 years old, became an orphan after both his parents were infected with HIV. His father died in 1999 and his mother died the next year. After that, Xiao Lei

lived with his grandfather but he too died last year. With no one left to look after him, Zhu's home was a godsend for Xiao Lei.

"When the child came, all he wanted was something to eat. It was obvious that he had gone hungry for a long time. It was very sad to see such a thing," Zhu's wife said. "He used to ask where his mother was, but later he stopped asking. Whenever he hears mention of Aids, he becomes very frightened," she said.

Xiao Shan, born in 1994, came together with his six-year old younger brother to stay with Zhu several months ago. Their parents died two years ago. In order to earn money for him and his brother, Xiao Shan did any jobs he could find, even carrying bricks. When asked what kinds of job he could do, Xiao answered confidently: "everything. I help push carts and carry bricks". Xiao Shan worked like this for two years, earning about 12 yuan a month.

## Can't afford quilts

Zhu basically pays for everything, and though he receives donations from well-wishers he faces constant struggles to cover costs. A few of the children have meals with their relatives but Zhu has to find money for food and tuition for most of them.

"Paying for their tuition costs more than 5000 yuan per semester and this is only for primary school. There are a couple of children already studying in middle school which is more expensive, from 300 yuan to 500 yuan. I have paid nearly 10,000 yuan for tuition for this term only," Zhu said.

However, according to commitments made by the central government, the tuition of such "Aids orphans" should be fully exempt from fees.



*A simple meal.*

"Before the term began in August, I went to see the county government and they told me the children would be exempt from tuition fees. But when the children went to school, they were asked to pay tuition without exemption of even one fen. I really don't know the reason. I had to ask for help from the children's relatives. At last, I paid the tuition fees myself."

Many people have made donations to Zhu's home, all kept on record by the village accountant, Pan Zhongliang, who has a book noting every expense, including a big one recently for buying a washing machine.

"After paying the tuition fees, I only had 1000 yuan left to cover meals for the next ten days. It was nearly October and the weather was becoming cold, but we did not have enough money to buy quilts."

## Assistance needed

Zhu used to run a small construction business and was con-

sidered a capable man in the village. But what with his illness and caring for the children, he has no time left to earn money so he has tried to seek funds from other sources.

He started with the county civil administration department. In April, he asked them for help. However, after going between several departments he got no results. The only donation he secured was 250 kg of flour set aside for his home.

Then he tried various charities. Zhu went to Beijing several times and consulted some organizations for children. He was told, "We don't provide assistance to individuals. You should go to the relevant county government and ask them to make applications on your behalf. Then we can provide assistance." He was back to square one.

The local county officials later offered to help Zhu find a new piece of land to set up a new orphanage. But Zhu was told he would have to pay the land and construction expenses himself. "When I asked how much the land was, they told me that it would cost twenty or thirty thousand yuan for 0.01 hectares. That could cover meals for the children for several years!" Zhu looked helpless.

Having received no help from any officials, Zhu continues to rely on donations from individuals. One Taiwanese person has been sending him 3000 yuan every month. This has at least helped cover the most important cost, food.

"Since I was diagnosed with HIV, I joined the Chinese Association of Venereal Disease and Aids Prevention. As a member of the association, I have got to know many friends, such as Doctor Xue Lianzhi in You'an Hospital. All of them are trying their best to help us. At present, my home is maintained through civilian support," he says.

## Adoption problem

There are actually a number of families that would like to adopt some of the children staying with Zhu. After a program about the orphanage was broadcast on CCTV, he received many calls asking about adopting the children. But there are difficulties in this matter, principally the legal procedures.

The children's remaining relatives are also less than keen on the idea. Zhu said that even though the relatives were not able to care for the children, they didn't like the idea of them being adopted by others. While Zhu Jinzhong provides a home for them, he has undertaken responsibilities rather than rights. "This place is somewhat backward and peoples' concepts are conservative," he says.

## Promising students

It's ten months now since Zhu started caring for the orphans. Though the experience has brought him a lot of problems, Zhu feels no regrets about what he has embarked on. He took us to see the children's dormitory on the second floor. On the walls there are various educational certificates showing the children's achievements in their studies.

"When I'm feeling upset, I come up here to look at these and I feel better," Zhu said with a smile. The quilts and bedding in the room were rather thin, even though the temperature outside was around zero during the interview. "I have no choice. Two children have to share one bed and one quilt. I know the weather is cold, but there's nothing I can do," Zhu said. Winter is coming, and there is not sufficient hot water for washing either.

## Health care and education

When asked what the most important issues facing his home were, Zhu answered, "one is education and the other is health care. I will probably die before the children are old enough to go to university, but for sure I will support them to study in middle schools. People will suffer in their lives without education and knowledge. I will not let that happen to these children."

"Another problem is health care. The children are very healthy now. But if any of them become ill, there's not much we can do for them. If they need expensive medicine, I can't afford it. The children know it. When they feel ill, or if they catch a cold, they never tell me. I can see that they are afraid of making me worried so they always just say, 'I am all right, uncle.'"

"I am not their father," says Zhu, "but in my heart, all of them are my children".



*Zhu's extended family*

*Photos by Wang Wei*





Zhu Yinping



Wu Jinju



Zhu Xiaohuan



Zhu Leyi



Wu Jinguang



Wang Chao



Shi Chunhong



Wang Quanyi



Zhu Xiaoling



Pan Mengmeng



Wang Ruiui

By Zeng Pengyu

**T**here are less than 20 days before the new year and there's a strong festive atmosphere in Beijing. What are your hopes for new year? If you hear what the Aids orphans want, you may be surprised what simple things they hope for. They do not want a fancy toy or a delicious cake. What they want most is a pencil, a book or an old bicycle.

**Wu Jinju**

A nine year old boy in grade three at his primary school, Wu lost both his parents to Aids. Before he came to Zhu's home in July this year, he lived with his grandfather for four years. Wu is a lovely boy with big eyes. When asked who he loves the most, he said it was Zhu jinzong, for helping him survive. **Hope for the new year: a dictionary**

**Wu Jinguan**

Wu Jinguan is eight years old, studying in preschool class. He came to Zhu's family together with his brother Wu Jinju in July 2003. The two brothers never leave each other. **Hope for the new year: a cartoon book**

**Wang Ruiui**

A nine-year-old girl in grade three at primary school. After her father died of Aids, her mother abandoned the child and left the family. She had been smiling all the time until we mentioned her mother. The experience has made her grow up quickly. Her hope for the new year is maybe the most difficult one. **Hope for the new year: I want to see my mother**

**Wang Ruili**

Ruili is the younger sister of Ruiui. Just six years old, she's



Zhu Yingbo



Wang Xiangqian



Zhu Fengkun



Zhu Wenxiu



Xie Yinglei



Yang Chenchen



Zhu Qiuge



Zhu Haibao



Wang Ruili



Huang Liuquan

Wang Guohui  
Photos by Wang Wei

# Hope for the New Year

the youngest girl in Zhu's home. She is too young to understand quite what has happened and when her elder sister is upset about her missing mother, the little girl can do nothing but stretch out her hand and wipe her sister's tears away. She even asks Ruiui with a smile: "Why do you cry?" **Hope for the new year: new clothes**

**Yang Chenchen**

Chenchen is a pretty girl in grade four at primary school. She came to Zhu's family in April 2003, having lost both her parents. When other children said that Chenchen was always crying, she smiled and vigorously denied it. She's doing well in her studies. **Hope for the new year: a big doll**

**Wang Guohui**

Wang is a ten-year-old boy in grade three at primary school. He and his nine-year-old brother used to live with their grandfather after their parents passed away, before coming to Zhu's family in July 2003. When the children were asked who was the best student in the home, they all pointed to Guohui. **Hope for the new year: a set of stationery.**

**Huang Liuquan**

Huang is seven years old and he's in grade one at primary school. He is a little timid and uncommunicative. When other boys make fun with each other, he always stays away. As the youngest boy in Zhu's home, he has the most innocent expression in his eyes. **Hope for the new year: a string of fireworks**

**Pan Mengmeng**

Mengmeng was in the first batch of children to come to Zhu's home. The eleven-year-old girl is a good student. On the wall of a room on the second floor, there are many award certificates achieved by Mengmeng. She once went to Beijing with Zhu Jinzhong, but she didn't get to see the place she most wanted to go to - Tiananmen Square. **Hope for the new year: a set of books on mathematics and Chinese**

**Zhu Xiaoling**

Xiaoling is the tallest girl in Zhu's family and also the most sensible. She always helps Zhu's wife tidy up the table after having a meal. She also mediates when the other children quarrel. **Hope for the new year: new clothes**

**Wang Quanyi**

Wang worked carrying bricks when he was nine years old. Wang succeed in continuing his school studies after joining Zhu's family. But having lost time, the 11-year-old boy can only study in grade two. When asked about the marks he's got, he was ashamed to say "not very good." **Hope for the new year: a note book and a pencil.**

**Zhu Haibao**

Haibao is 13 years old and studying in grade one at junior middle school. After both his parents passed away he and his brother stayed with their grandparents but later they came to the family. According to Haibao, "Nowhere can compare with here. I can sleep and eat well, my life is much better than before." He will always appreciate Zhu Jinzhong for working so hard to collect the tuition fee of 260 yuan for this term. **Hope for the new year: For uncle Zhu to stay in good health**

**Zhu Xiaohuan**

Zhu is an eleven-year-old orphan in grade five at primary school. Our press photographer was surprised by her delicate features, and said she looked like famous actress Gong Li their copy of. According to Xiaohuan, 100,000 Pieces of Why in the family has become tattered. **Hope for the new year: a new 100,000 Pieces of Why.**

**Wang Xiangqian**

Wang is eight years old and studying in grade at primary school. His father has died of Aids and his mother is also infected and is bedridden. Zhu said Xiangqian did not cry when his mother entrusted him to Zhu's home and just kept silent. When asked why he was so quiet, he said: "missing mum." **Hope for the new year: a box of chocolate**

**Zhu leyi**

Zhu is a 12-year-old orphan in grade five at primary school. It was raining the day before *Beijing Youth Daily* arrived at the village, so little Leyi wore a pair of rubber boots. But he was still wearing the boots in the sunshine yesterday. Zhu explained that shoes are difficult to buy, so little Leyi wears the boots all the time. **Hope for the new year: a pair of new shoes**

**Zhu Qiuge**

Zhu Qiuge is 11 years old. She's in grade four at primary school. Her mother has died and her father is also infected. She also has a 12-year-old brother who is in another orphanage. Her smile disappeared when we mentioned her brother. "I miss him so much!" she said. **Hope for the new year: my elder brother and I each get new clothes**

**Shi Chunhong**

Shi is an eleven-year-old orphan in grade four at primary school. The little girl is very clever and very lively. She can remember all the other children's names and became a good assistant to *Beijing Youth Daily*. Looking at the reports on our computer, she thought for a moment and said, "I want to be a reporter in the future." **Hope for the new year: a set of composition reference books**

**Zhu Wenxiu**

Zhu is ten years old and studying in grade four at primary school. Her face and hands are always very clean. In her hair there are three delicate hairpins. Young as she is, she combs her hair herself every day. She's top of her class and has even heard of Tsinghua and Peking University. She asked us: "May I also go to college?" **Hope for the new year: new clothes**

**Wang Chao**

Wang is an eleven-year-old orphan in grade four at primary school. Unlike other children who have not been outside the county, he has been to Xinjiang

with his parents. When he was asked if he had heard of Beijing, he said, "I know there is a Great Wall in Beijing." **Hope for the new year: a set of stationery**

**Xie Yinglei**

Xie is an eleven-year-old girl in grade four at primary school. After her parents passed away she came to Zhu's family in May, 2003. Xie wishes she had a bag to take her books to school. **Hope for the new year: a new bag**

**Zhu Yinping**

The elder daughter of Zhu Jinzhong, she is 13 years old and is in grade one at junior middle school. She said she knew about her father's condition and that Aids is an incurable disease. In the future little Yinping wants to be a doctor. **Hope for the new year: she always wants a language learning machine, but there's probably not enough money. Zhu wouldn't spend the money, even on his own daughter.**

**Zhu Fengkun**

The son of Zhu Jinzhong, he is in grade five at primary school. Fengkun and his sister live and eat with the other children in the family. When Pan Mengmeng - a girl who is older than him - came to the family in February, Fengkun asked her to call him "elder brother." He explained, "Only an elder brother can protect them properly." Zhu Fengkun likes the lively scene of the family very much, because he has a lot of friends. **Hope for the new year: a set of cartoon books**

**Zhu Yingbo**

Zhu is fourteen years old and is studying in grade one at junior middle school. Though it's freezing outside, he only wears a thin cotton-padded jacket. He is a good student and his English score is always above 90. His shoes and trousers are full of mud, because he has to walk to his school which is far away from the home every day. **Hope for the new year: a bicycle, an old one is okay.**





Thank you for your presents.

## Help from Beijing

By Zeng Pengyu

By Tuesday, *Beijing Youth Daily* had received more than 70,000 yuan in cash as well as other articles donated for Zhu's children. The children are going to get some "New Year Presents" after all.

All the donated clothing has

been carefully disinfected. The articles included things for study use, such as books, which the children earnestly longed for. There were also 11 bikes. Lü Shiyang, former general secretary of Beijing-based Dabao Group, said he would come back with us to see Zhu Jinzhong

and discuss building a new house for the children.

The children have been told about how Beijing citizens want to help them. Six-year-old Wang Ruili, the youngest child in Zhu's home, said "Thank you, uncles and aunts in Beijing!"

## Who Can Help the Children?

By Zeng Pengyu

While people in Beijing have been donating money to Aids orphans in Henan Province, they've also been asking what is being done by local governments to tackle the problem. Though it's possible to help people like Zhu Jinzhong, it will not solve the whole problem. What can be done to contain the epidemic, and just how many aids orphans are there?

### A flood of applications

Zhu has received a lot of application letters recently from children hoping to come to his home. Unfortunately, Zhu has had to turn them down as accommodation space and funds are already limited.

As more and more parents who donated blood succumb to Aids, more children are becoming orphans. "People know I took in many orphans. So they always contact me," says Zhu. "But there's no way I can accept them".

As it is, 20 more orphans will come to Zhu's home during the Spring Festival. When asked where they will sleep, Zhu says they'll have to sleep in the same rooms as the other children. "We'll just have to squeeze them in."

One piece of good news for Zhu is that he has just received a donation of 5,200 yuan to go towards a boiler room so they can have hot water. "I will try to let the children have a hot water bath when Spring Festival comes," said Zhu.

So far, Zhu has set aside the best four rooms on the second floor of his home for the children's dormitories, while he and his wife stay in a wet and cold room on the first floor. However, there are still several children without a room. Zhu set up some beds in the canteen for the children so nine of them can sleep there.

Lack of space is a considerable headache for Zhu. He wanted to build some new rooms on the land in front of his house gate, but he would have to pay 6,000 yuan for the land. It's too much. "That amount of money could feed the children for two months," he says.

### Many children suffering

There are many children who are not as lucky as those taken in by Zhu. Fan, a local resident in Shuangmiao, has two children. Fan, his wife and his children all contracted HIV. Even though they are not ill yet, the family are struggling to make ends meet. So Fan is happy to see the amount of attention Zhu has gained. He hopes it might make it possible for him to get help. "I don't want for my children to become orphans before they receive any help," he said.

But there are Aids orphans in virtually every county in Henan where blood donating was big business.

According to current statistics, there are over one million people infected by HIV in China. If intervention measures - such as providing drugs that can slow the course of the disease - are not successful, the number of Aids orphans in the country will soon rise to 260,000.

### Fear of the future

When Zhu was asked whether he was satisfied with the current situation, he answered "so far so good. But the long-term view is still not too promising. The children are smart and sensible, but my wife and I are too busy to look after them properly. The children basically get no family education," he says.

"I know some little children have a habit of picking up or even stealing others' small things. They are still young but they have got such bad habits. What will hap-

pen when they are grown up?"

Some of the children living with Zhu are not doing too well in their studies and he is worried about their future. At the beginning of December, he went to Zhengzhou City and visited a martial arts school to see if he could send some children there.

"My idea is simple. If they want to study, I will support them. If they don't want to study, I have to find some skills they can learn in order for them to live. I can't take care of them forever."

Zhu's time may already be running out. He found out he was infected in 2001. The normal time before symptoms begin to emerge is three to five years. Zhu says his health is already becoming worse and he often feels tired.

### Epidemic destroys economy

Many have asked why local governments aren't doing more to take care of the children. It seems the problem may not be quite so simple as it seems. Part of the difficulty is that the disease has wrought economic devastation on the hardest hit areas, with no-one willing to buy anything produced by local industry. So the local authorities don't have any money.

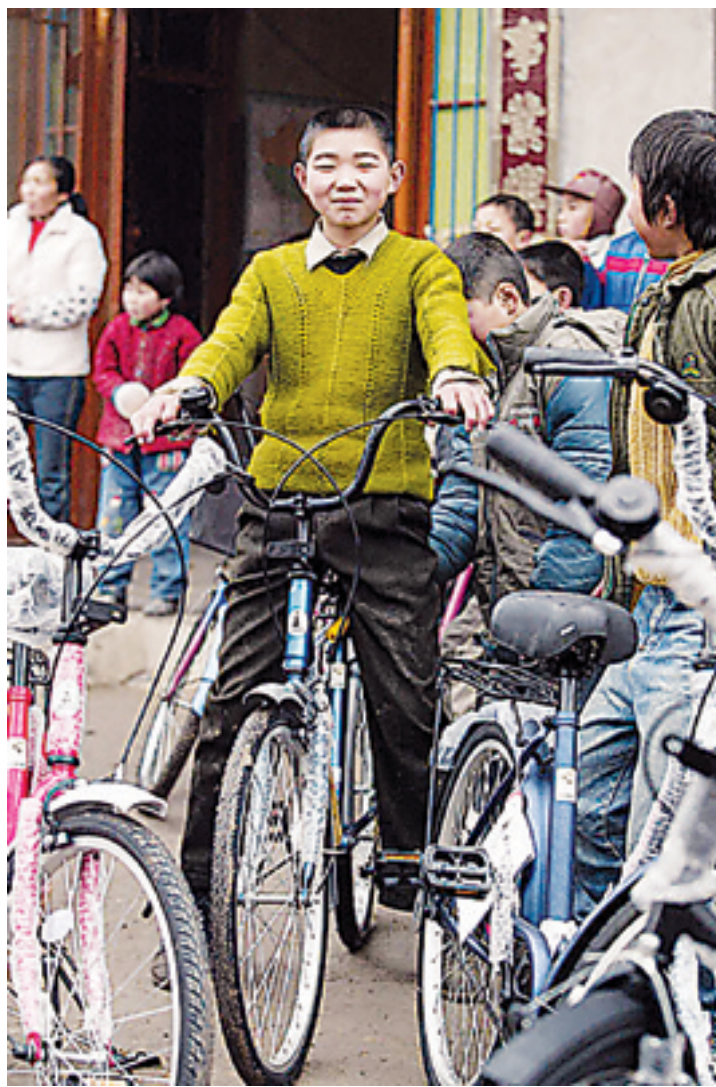
Zhecheng county where Shuangmiao village is located is one of the worst hit areas in Henan Province. No one comes into the county from outside now, so investment has dried up. The farming industry has also been ruined.

One of the last local enterprises to survive was alcohol factories but even these have now been closed due to the difficulty of selling anything produced in the tainted county. This situation limits the local government's ability to control the spread of the epidemic, let alone help out those who have already become victims.



Just what I wanted.

New clothes at last.



Getting to school will be easier now.



Is this for me?

Photos by Jia Ting

## Providing a Home?

By Li Xiangquan

Even Zhu Jinzhong recognizes that looking after Aids orphans in a home presents difficulties. It's not the same as having a family and it's hard to monitor the healthy development of children's characters.

According to Liang Yangyang, director of the education section of Dongzhen Orphans Boarding School in Beijing, "Aids orphans" are likely to suffer psychological problems to varying degrees, given their experiences. In some cases, the reactions are extreme, making the children antisocial and difficult to integrate. This presents obvious problems for orphanages or special homes.

### Stigma blocks adoption

One woman who lost her 11-year old child to leukaemia several years ago has faced an all-too typical frustration in her efforts to help a Henan orphan. She has offered to adopt a child and would seem to be eminently qualified, having financial means, being over 30 years old and not suffering from any serious illness.

Unfortunately, according to local customs in Henan, giving up a child for adoption carries a social stigma. Even if the parents have died and the grandparents or other relatives are unable to provide a home for a child, adoption is still equated with abandonment. So people are unwilling to see children taken away, even to a good home.

Sun Ruojun, from the research and education office of civil laws of the People's University of China, says litigation is the only solution to this problem. "If relatives are not willing to sign over their rights as legal guardians but are not able to fulfill their responsibilities to a child, someone who wants to adopt the child must do so through the local courts."

### Another way?

Simply providing a home for orphans without gaining any legal rights may be the only way to help the children, says Gao Yaojie, a famous doctor in Henan Province who has spent years trying to bring the problem to national attention.

In Gao Yaojie's hometown, Suji Town in Cao County, Shandong Province, there are six healthy Aids orphans who have found new families. The oldest is 15 years old and the youngest one is five.

Gao says the most important thing is that the people providing a home should have enough money to provide for food and education. "Another condition is that their homes should be far away from those of the relatives of the child, to avoid any disturbances."

Sun Ruojun also thought this was a good solution. "Just taking the children in does not involve any legal problems, so this places less pressure on the legal guardians."

### Where does the money go?

Many people have expressed willingness to provide financial assistance to the orphans to help them complete their studies. Ideally, they'd like to provide regular payments over a number of years until the orphans are grown up.

But there's an obvious problem with this which is lack of control over how the money is used. What if the orphans' legal guardians don't use the money for the children? Or what if the children receive the money and spend it on something else? As yet there are no mechanisms for dealing with this. There's no shortage of people willing to help. They just don't know how to.





# Fantasy Football

**"One afternoon in the autumn of 1997, there was a heavy rain coming down and there was water all over the ground. It was impossible to train. I sat in my office and thought no-one would come. But when I went outside, I saw a couple of boys standing in the rain waiting for me. I was deeply touched."**

*How long can you keep it up?*

*By Hou Mingxin*

**I**t was a proud moment for Cai Wei as a team of young footballers he had trained stood shoulder to shoulder with Ronaldo, David Beckham and Zinedine Zidane. They weren't about to play them, not yet, but Cai's young team did get the honor of leading the mighty Real Madrid football team onto the pitch at the Workers Stadium on August 1 for a friendly match against Dragon Team, a local side.

Cai's boys had come a long way, some of them having known almost nothing about football just a year ago. They may even go on to fulfill Cai's most cherished dream: producing world-class soccer players from his own training school.



## The real goal

Cai is now the manager and head coach of Off Road Football Club, an amateur club in Beijing.

Before he established the club in 1997, Cai was the human resources manager for a famous joint-venture hotel in Beijing. He may have been earning a high salary but it was a long way from his true vocation so he decided to throw it in and get back to the passion for football he'd had since childhood.



*This is how the Brazilians do it.*

"I was born in a poor family in Beijing, so I've always wanted to help boys from the same background," Cai told *Beijing Today*.

"I loved the game when I was young, but I couldn't afford a football of my own. Sometimes I had to kick an apple or anything I could find as a football. At that time the city's hutongs were the only playground for poor boys like me," the 40-year-old recalled.

When Cai was eight years old, a football coach from Workers Stadium Athletic School came to

his school to scout for young football talent. Cai was not selected, but he pleaded with the coach to give him a chance. The coach was impressed by his determination and allowed him to train with the other players. After six months, Cai's hard work paid off and the coach allowed him to join the squad.

"I don't know why I dared to ask the coach to give me a chance, considering I was only eight years old; just my deep love for soccer I think," says Cai.

"I'm grateful for that experience. It gave me an opportunity to pursue my soccer dream. It's probably why I later gave up my work in the hotel and set up a club for boys like me who couldn't afford training," he added.

When he was 17, Cai joined the army and signed up for the Nanjing Army Soccer Team as a striker.

In 1984, Cai got into the Guangzhou-based Army Sports College where he studied for a degree in military sports. In this sense, Cai says he is not upset he didn't get to play for the national team as college education was a rare privilege in those days.

After graduating, Cai served in the army as a football coach. In 1990, he left the army and got a job with a joint-venture hotel in Beijing. His ability and hard work soon won him promotion and he became the human resources manager.

"I would have had a bright future in that hotel if I had stayed," Cai told *Beijing Today*. "But I felt I was drifting away from my dream, which really troubled me. Still, my experience in the hotel taught me a lot of management skills I later used to operate my club."

## Local talent

China's failure to qualify for the 1998 World Cup in France triggered Cai's decision to quit his job at the hotel and set up a soccer club.

"There are a lot of talented boys who can't afford football training," says Cai, explaining why he decided to focus on boys from underprivileged families and train them for free.

His family and friends were all against the idea. They all asked where he would get financial support to run such a club.

"A friend of mine used to run a soccer club but it went bust. He said 'train boys for free? Are you crazy? I ran my club for profit and still didn't make enough money to survive,'" Cai recalled.

"They all said I should use the money I had saved to buy an apartment rather than spend it on the club. They also thought I should try and get my job in the hotel back. My family still lived in a 14 square-meter room at that time," he added.

But Cai had made up his mind and no one could change it. Three months after he left the hotel, the Off Road Football Club was up and running in the Asian Games Village in Beijing.

Thirty boys were picked from a couple of local primary and middle schools. Most of them were from poor families but they had a strong desire to make it as a football player.

"I was very excited because I felt I was finally going ahead with my dream," Cai told *Beijing Today*.

The boys appreciated what their coach was doing for them and repaid his commitment. "One afternoon in the autumn of 1997, there was a heavy rain coming down and there was water all over the ground. It was impossible to train. I sat in my office and thought no-one would come. But when I went outside, I saw a couple of boys standing in the rain waiting for me. I was deeply touched," Cai recalled.

Relying on his savings and some support from his brother, a business man and a former footballer, Cai's club survived the first year. The total costs, for rent of the ground and office, nutrition, clothes, shoes and other items, came to nearly 200,000 yuan.

In the second year, Cai's savings ran out and his brother's support was limited, so the club began facing financial difficulties. Cai had to find ways to make some money for the club.

He decided to organize some matches between company teams and he refereed the matches himself for an extra fee. Sometimes he would referee four matches in one day.

Cai looked for sponsors but the local enterprises he spoke to weren't interested. "The boss of a private enterprise told me he would prefer to sponsor a professional league club than engage in charity activities, which he thought should be the business of the government."

Fortunately, there were some people and enterprises willing to provide some support for the club, but the money was still not enough.

In the club's first three years, Cai ran up debts of more than 100,000 yuan.

"I began to realize I needed to change the way I ran the club. If I wanted to help poor boys and train up world-class stars, the club had to be financially viable," Cai says.

Cai later found that organizing amateur adult teams was a better way to solve the club's financial problems – since there are a large

number of football enthusiasts in the capital and many companies have their own soccer team. Now, the club accommodates ten adult teams. The income that generates is channeled into training more boys.

## Greater things

Several of the first 30 boys selected by the club have been picked up by professional clubs including top league outfits like Beijing Hyundai, Shanxi Guoli and Bayi. Cai is gradually getting closer to his dream.

The different teams at Cai's club have also been making strong progress in Beijing's different competitions in recent years.

Last year, one of Cai's boys went to South Korea to represent Beijing in a competition celebrating the World Cup.

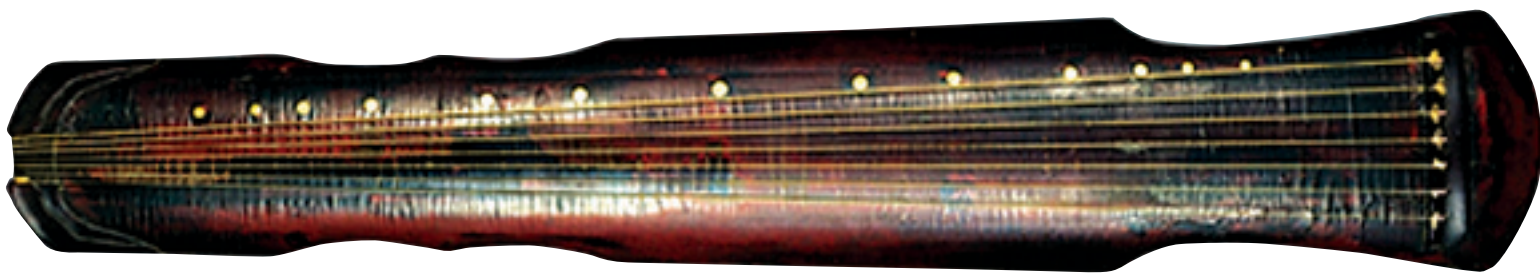
The Off Road club has built up a good reputation and more and more families are sending their boys there. Cai still sticks to his principal: giving poor boys a chance.

Cai is a long way from feeling satisfied with what he's achieved so far. He's planning to hire foreign coaches to instruct his team, hoping this will help his boys grasp a foreign language as well as soccer skills. After all, when the likes of Real Madrid and Manchester United come calling at Cai's academy, the young players will need to be ready.



Photos by Chen Bai





The most expensive guqin ever sold at an auction, changed hands for 8.9 million yuan on November 26.

# Now for the Next Three Millennia

An ancient Chinese musical instrument is listed by UNESCO as a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity

By Iris Miao

It might be fair to say that November was the month for the *guqin*, a traditional seven-stringed music instrument with a history of 3,000 years.

UNESCO released its second list of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity on November 7, and the guqin is one of the 28 new inclusions. At a China Guardian auction two weeks later, a Tang Dynasty (618-907) guqin from the collection of Wang Shixiang went to a new owner for the price of 8.9 million yuan, breaking the auction record for Tang guqin set at a China Guardian auction in July.

The unprecedented price served as a catalyst for wider recognition of the ancient instrument in the wake of the UNESCO proclamation. Small scale celebrations were held throughout November, and continued into December. This weekend there will be an official ceremony to mark the new-found international recognition of the guqin held by the Music Department of the China Art Research Institute.

According to an introduction to the musical instrument on UNESCO's website, the seven-stringed guqin has throughout China's history occupied a privileged position as the bearer of a refined tradition that has permeated Chinese painting, poetry and literature.

Today, guqin playing

represents China's most developed solo musical instrument tradition. Over past centuries, the evolving guqin tradition flourished, producing generations of outstanding players. However nowadays, there are fewer than one thousand accomplished guqin players and perhaps no more than fifty who could be termed "masters." Moreover, the original repertory of several thousand compositions has dwindled to a mere one hundred works that are performed today with any regularity.

Zhang Huaying, who participated in the application process for the guqin's UNESCO listing, told *Beijing Today* Monday, "UNESCO asked the applying countries to submit solutions to counter the negative impact of globalization and commercialism on the oral and intangible heritages. We left that section of the form blank, as we have no solutions at present." Zhang is a guqin player and doctoral candidate

at the China Art Research Institute.

Master guqin player Li Xiangting told *Beijing Today*, "It is definitely an epoch-making moment for the guqin." Asked to what extent the UNESCO listing would save the guqin from disappearing into history, he compared it with the listing of the even more endangered Kunqu Opera, which was proclaimed a masterpiece two years ago.

"The inheritance, protection and development of the guqin is much easier than it is for Kunqu Opera. Kunqu requires the collaboration of many people, and no one person can teach all the opera's different types of roles, however for the guqin, one teacher make a difference," he said.

To Li, the most problematic issue is the guqin's lack of popularity, "Eighty percent of the people I talk to, even university professors, confuse the 21-stringed guzheng with the guqin, to say nothing of having a comprehensive understanding of the music."

He suggests four measures that could be taken to protect and preserve this national treasure. First of all, all musical institutions of provincial level and above should employ one guqin player. At present, there is only one professional guqin player in China, Yu Qingxin of the Central National Orchestra. If this were to happen, more people would learn the instrument as a profession.

Secondly, art research institutes should have a guqin researcher; Thirdly there should be a guqin teacher in every music department in universities and colleges nationwide; Finally, in all secondary school music classes, there should be at least one guqin class, in which teenagers learn the four classic pieces, *Guangling San*, *Liushui*, *Meihua Sannong* and *Xiaoxiang Shuiyun*. "I think these measures are easy to implement, and would be very effective in the preserving of guqin," he said.

Because of its antiquity

and aura of scholarly gentility, young listeners frequently complain that they cannot understand the music, and assume that the guqin must be enormously difficult to learn to play. "This is a complete misunderstanding," says 63-year-old Li, who has been teaching the guqin for four decades, "The basic skills are easy to master since the instrument has marked pitch positions. Even the most difficult melody is not hard to grasp technically."

Wu Zhao, director of the China Guqin Association and also a master player, echoes Li's comments on the simplicity of guqin music, but warns, "To appreciate guqin music does require the listener to achieve a degree of inner quiet." The guqin will never disappear in this new hi-tech century, Wu maintains, "After the hustle and bustle of a day's work, guqin music can help one to relax physically and spiritually. This may explain why there is an increasing number of young professionals learning to play the ancient instrument."

Regarding the current state of Guqin, Wu expresses optimism, though he says it is inevitable that commercialism will have a detrimental effect. The main problem, he insists, lies in the education system. Students are trained according to the western music system regardless of their major. "The western music system and the traditional Chinese music system, guqin as a representative, are poles apart," says Wu, "How can you expect students to appreciate the guqin if they are preloaded with the western music criteria?"

Taking a practical approach, Wu chooses to teach students, specifically, children. "The seven or eight year old children have a strong capacity to imitate, they learn very fast," he says, "No matter what, to inherit, to protect and to develop, it is rudimentary to start with children."

**Guqin performances:**

*Beijing Guqin Association*  
**Where:** Tanbo Yiyuan, 24A, Anding Road, Chaoyang District  
**When:** 9:30-11:30am, December 14  
**Admission:** free  
**Tel:** 6443 8757  
*Guqin teachers from Beijing and Tianjin*  
**Where:** Dongyuan Theater, inside Changpu Park (west of the Grand Hotel)  
**When:** 7:30-9:30pm, December 18  
**Admission:** 160yuan, 200 yuan  
**Tel:** 8511 5366

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## A Voice for the Avant-Garde

By Darlene Lee

Chongqing native Xu Bing is one of the world's best-known contemporary Chinese artists. He began his career with innovations in printmaking and with some of China's first installation art, including his most famous work *Book from the Sky*. After completing his Master of Fine Arts from the Central Academy of Fine Art, he relocated to New York.

His installations have been exhibited around the world. This year alone he was featured in solo exhibits at the Chinese Art Center in Manchester, England, the Fukuoka Asian art Museum in Japan, the Hong Kong Arts Center, and the Princeton University Art Museum in the US.

In 1999, Xu won a MacArthur Foundation Genius Award, and this September was named the Arts and Culture laureate of the 14th Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize.

Xu Bing's work has been recognized for its concepts and groundbreaking value, with recent pieces selling from 66,000 yuan to 93,500 yuan at China Guardian and Huachen auctions in Beijing.

Karen Smith, an independent contemporary art history who has been based in Beijing for 11 years, recently worked with Xu. Of his international influence, she notes, "Xu Bing is very much at the cutting edge of avant-garde art. He is the one artist who has made Chinese contemporary art accessible. The interactive aspect of his work is critical. It's very approachable while drawing on what appear to be very traditional Chinese values," says Smith.

According to independent contemporary art curator Feng Boyi, "[Xu] has taken a traditional print concept into the contemporary realm. It's an important breakthrough, and he made this leap quite early. He's not just someone chasing whatever is fashionable, he's been very focused on what he wants to say and what methods he uses to say them.

"He is unique in his emphasis on creativity. He employs fully the richness of Chinese culture while bringing it to the international contemporary art arena. Xu Bing deals with current issues while maintaining an objective distance...and has been instrumental in bringing Chinese culture to the rest of the world," concludes Feng."

Xu now divides his time between China and New York.

# Xu Bing Talks



*Book from the Sky* was exhibited at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.

This week, *Beijing Today* correspondent Darlene Lee interviewed Xu Bing, one of China's most prominent working artists and spokesmen of contemporary culture.

**Q:** Now that you split your time between New York and China, where do you call home?

**Xu Bing:** To me, living anywhere in the world is the same. There is nowhere that is my own space because I am always between spaces. I feel that the state I experienced of having left one place but not yet knowing the next destination was actually a pretty good situation to be in. That unclear, uncertain terrain has become a space where my art can grow and develop.

**Q:** How do you see your role in Chinese contemporary art?

**XB:** This is not a role that I can define myself. Last year there was a discussion about the 10 artists that had the largest influence over Chinese art in the last century. I was included in this discussion.

A few artists such as Huang Yongping, Cai Guoqiang, and myself are among the first generation of the Chinese mainland artists that have had an international impact. In the past, we received very academic train-

ing, but have since strayed from the official path to create "New-Wave" art. Our new work made some conservatives uncomfortable, and became the target of criticism.

Some critics always believed that contemporary art was synonymous with social critique, so art was guarded very carefully. The relationship between the government and contemporary artists is now changing as many Chinese artists have achieved international success. The government is also now interested in demonstrating their open interest in China's new culture. For instance, in the last few years my work has been featured in a few official exhibitions in China, which is a great change from a decade before.

**Q:** What thoughts do you have about your current international reputation?



The Living Word shown at the Sackler Gallery



Xu Bing in his Brooklyn studio in 2002

Photo by Russell Panczeko

al reputation?

**XB:** I do not like for my work to directly address any singular topic. Actually, I feel the task of the curator is sometimes meaningless, because I feel art itself cannot be interpreted through language. If art could be interpreted through language, there would not be any reason for the existence of art.

Since my work suggests various meanings, people have varied perspectives on my work.

I find that scholars as well as common people are interested in my work, which I find a positive point. There are many layers to my work, and different people, depending on their interests, are able to interact with my work at different levels. Once an artwork is completed and publicized, it becomes part of the public domain and any response is appropriate and acceptable.

**Q:** And the international price

of your work?

**XB:** Recently, the works of a few contemporary Chinese artists have quickly achieved very high prices. My works perhaps hold the highest record. People are willing to collect and exhibit my work not for the artwork as an object itself, but for the ideas in the work that allow for new ways of thinking.

**Q:** What are you working on now?

**XB:** No matter what outer form my works take, they are all linked by a common thread, which is to construct some kind of obstacle to people's habitual ways of thinking - what I call the "cognitive structures" of the mind. The laziness of habitual thinking is challenged, and the result is the opening up of a wider, untapped cognitive space in which to rediscover long-forgotten, primary sources of cognition and understanding.

Now, I'm working on new projects that, on the surface, are very different from my previous works. However, they still deal with communication and relationships. In the past, my works have primarily focused on language. I am now interested in forms of communication that are even more deeply rooted.

My new projects deal with the relationship between humans and nature in our technologically advanced environment and how it has changed the ways that we communicate. I am currently collaborating with a scientist. The final creation will appear more like a scientific invention than a traditional art piece. The idea behind this is to expand the creative possibilities of art, and to allow people to reconsider the fundamental purpose of art.

I am not necessarily interested in creating art that will function well in the existing art system, but rather to create works that are: 1) very creative; 2) useful to society and inspire others; and 3) well crafted. One work that I am creating is a very special computer desk that deals with the relationship between humans, nature, and their environments. Another project involves cell phones and new forms of communication that challenges our concepts of gender and private and public realms.

**Q:** Where do you see Chinese contemporary art heading?

**XB:** Right now China is the most fertile land for the development of art. Artists in China are more active than in any other location in the world because right now China is the most active nation in the world. There simultaneously exist many cultures, allowing for new mutations and possibilities.

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# Infernal Affairs in Beijing

By Guo Yuandan

**I**nfernal Affairs III, the eagerly anticipated final installment of the *Infernal Affairs* trilogy premiered at the Great Hall of the People on Monday night.

Directed by Andy Lau and Alan Mak, the premiere of the HK \$70 million movie attracted scores of reporters to the ceremony, which was attended by the six stars, Andy Lau, Tony Leung, Leon Lai, Chen Daoming, Anthony Wong, and Eric Tsang.

The first *Infernal Affairs* marked a resurgence for Hong Kong cinema when it was released in December 2002.

In addition to breaking box office records, (it took HK \$50 million in Hong Kong), *Infernal Affairs* has also had strong sales on DVD.

The movie sparked a bidding war in January this year among major Hollywood studios DreamWorks, Paramount and Columbia. Eventually Warner Brothers won the contract, paying a hefty US \$1.75 million for the film's remake rights, which will be produced by Brad Pitt.

*Infernal Affairs III* picks up with Ming (Andy Lau) under investigation and temporarily demoted after Yan (Tony Leung)'s death. When Ming gets acquainted with Yeung (Leon Lai), a rising star in the police force, Ming suspects that Yeung may also be a triad mole. Meanwhile, Ming is under surveillance from Shen, an old partner of his crime boss Sam. Desperate to lead a new life, Ming is determined to expose Yeung while covering up his own past.

# Beijing Stands for Messiah

By Darlene Lee

China's International Festival Chorus and International Festival Orchestra treated audiences to a high-caliber musical evening last Saturday at the Forbidden City Concert Hall, performing Handel's *Messiah* to a sold-out house.

The second annual performance of the *Messiah* featured guest conductor Andrew Nethsingha, director of music at Gloucester Cathedral, as well as vocal soloists Cintia de los Santos from Brazil, and Zhang Yuan, Li Bing and Wu Chuncan from China. The orchestra, led by Jin Haiyin, came together specially to accompany the chorus.

George Frederic Handel's *Messiah* premiered in Dublin in April, 1742. King George II was so moved by the music that he stood up at a subsequent performance in London. The audience rose to their feet out of deference to the king, and thus began the tradition of



China's International Festival Chorus and International Festival Orchestra on stage at the Forbidden City Concert Hall  
Photo by Iris Miao

standing for the Hallelujah Chorus, which the Beijing audience continued on Saturday.

Proceeds from the event, which was sponsored by Guotai Junan Allianz Fund Management, will go towards supporting the chorus' next concert on April 10, Easter Saturday. Beijing-based British conductor and composer Nicholas Smith told *Beijing Today* Monday evening, "This is the first concert to get sponsorship. Before we lived hand to mouth and stayed afloat only through ticket sales." Smith founded the International Festival Chorus with singers James Baer and Nancy Fraser.

Since its debut in March 2002, the chorus has brought three to four choral concerts a year to Beijing. Singers of 20 nationalities and wide-ranging musical backgrounds give their time on a volunteer basis. "The choir is very committed and we rehearse intensively. This year's concert achieved a very high quality sound, so I'm really pleased with the result. I think the choir really had a ball," said Smith.

Choir member and conductor for students at the Central Conservatory of Music, Jesse Weiner, concurs, "I've sung *Messiah* many times and this one got me really excited. Andrew really brought us to a new level. He is great to work with. He knows what he wants from the voices and is not afraid to ask for it."

Scheduled to guest conduct in 2005, Nethsinga was called in at the last minute when plans changed. "The Norwegian conductor who was scheduled to guest conduct this year suddenly fell ill. So I called Andrew to see if he could make it ... and thank goodness he did," recounted Smith.



# Wu Bai Back with New Album

By Zhu Yuan

Taiwan pop singer Wu Bai released his new album *Bridge of Tears (Leiqiao)* in Guangzhou Sunday.

Compared with his earlier music, the songs on the new album have a softer, more sentimental sound, which will no doubt have a wider commercial appeal.

The 10 songs on *Bridge of Tears* are all written by Wu, and include *Bridge of Tears*, *Evening Blow*, *Rosebush around the Corner*, *Go on Living* and *Broken Radios*.

He told journalists at the release that the title track was "a vivid description of nature" inspired by the "glowing sunshine on a bridge on the way back to Taipei."

It took six months to record the album, using 24-track tape deck. It was mixed by Californian producer Bill Schnee.

## WORLDWIDE



Trista Rehn and Ryan Sutter

# Bachelorette Trista Marries Fireman Ryan

*Bachelorette* star Trista Rehn has ended her single days, marrying fireman Ryan Sutter in a million-dollar wedding near Palm Springs, California, that will be televised this week, a publicity firm said on Sunday.

The couple exchanged vows in front of television cameras and 300 guests, including some of the bride's former suitors from *The Bachelorette*. The blond former cheerleader's search for a mate in the reality television series earlier this year grabbed stellar ratings for ABC, the network which airs *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* series.

ABC showed on December 10 a special on the wedding at the Lodge at Rancho Mirage, a hotel and resort about 120 miles east of Los Angeles.



Ozzy Osbourne

# Ozzy Osbourne Badly Injured in Crash in England

Rocker Ozzy Osbourne underwent emergency surgery at a hospital in Britain after suffering serious injuries in an all-terrain vehicle crash on the grounds of his estate in Buckinghamshire, his publicist said on Monday.

"During examination, doctors found that Ozzy had broken his collarbone, six ribs and a vertebra in his neck," publicist Cindy Guagenti said in a brief written statement, which added that the injuries were not considered life threatening.

"Ozzy is currently undergoing emergency surgery to lift the collarbone which is believed to be resting on a major artery interrupting blood flow to his arm," Guagenti said in the statement. "Surgeons are also working to alleviate some bleeding into his lungs."

The 55-year-old heavy metal rocker was injured while riding the all-terrain vehicle during a day off from promoting his new single, a duet with his daughter Kelly titled *Changes*.

# Washington Honors Stars for Cultural Contributions

*Godfather of Soul* James Brown and country music icon Loretta Lynn were among five stars honored in Washington on Sunday for their contributions to American culture.

Brown and Lynn joined violinist Itzhak Perlman, comedian Carol Burnett and film director Mike Nichols – whose films include *The Graduate* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* – as this year's Kennedy Center honorees.

The annual celebration culminated in a gala performance attended by President Bush at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts.

Bush hosted the honorees at a White House reception before the performance, calling the group an "interesting mix" bound by "superior performance" throughout their careers. The president's father, George Bush, made an appearance at the show to congratulate Lynn – perhaps best known for the landmark hit *Coal Miner's Daughter* – on being an *American original*.

# David Bowie, Hit by Flu, Postpones More US Shows

British rocker David Bowie again postponed the kick-off of his first North American tour in eight years after being confined to bed by influenza, the concert promoter said Monday.

The opening of Bowie's *A Reality Tour* was delayed last week after the illness forced him to cancel shows in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Washington, DC.

But now Bowie has postponed two more shows – a Tuesday performance at Boston's FleetCenter and a Wednesday show at Philadelphia's First Union Spectrum – as doctors ordered him to remain in bed for a few days longer.

The promoter, Clear Channel Entertainment, said it now expects the tour to kick off Friday in Toronto. It said tickets for the postponed shows would be honored at the rescheduled events.



David Bowie

Reuters

Edited by Guo Yuandan

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# Woods Wins Fifth Straight PGA Player of Year



"It was disappointing in majors for me this year, but of the biggest tournaments in the world, I got a couple of them." – Tiger Woods  
Photo by Photocom

By Hou Mingxin

On Monday, Tiger Woods was named the Professional Golfer's Association of America (PGA) player of the year, the unprecedented fifth time the American golf great has claimed the title.

Woods, the No. 1 player in the world, narrowly beat out his closest rival Vijay Singh for the honor.

"I would have been surprised if I had not won," Woods told ESPN. "I won five times on Tour this year, more than anyone else on Tour."

It is the first time since Greg Norman won the title in 1995 that a golfer without a major in a calendar year was selected as player of the year.

Indeed, some critics questioned Woods' claims to this season's title as a result of his disappointing

form in the majors.

Plagued by a knee injury and dogged by media suggestions that his domination of the game had been broken, Woods often appeared to be struggling in what has proven to be the toughest period of his career.

Woods defended his play and argued that his legendary performance in 2000 had colored perceptions of his other seasons. In that year, he took home victories in an incredible nine tournaments, including three of the four majors.

"The year 2000 was a magical year," said Woods. "But it's hard to duplicate that. It was disappointing in majors for me this year, but of the biggest tournaments in the world, I got a couple of them."

## Lifetime Ban for Steroid Users Approved by USATF

By Hou Mingxin

The USA Track and Field (USATF) decided Sunday to impose lifetime bans on American athletes who test positive for steroid use, even for first offenses, according to a statement published on the organization's official website.

The ban was approved by a large majority of the 1,120 delegates at the organization's annual meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina.

However, the ban will not go into effect until the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) approves it and the move is shown to be in compliance with the US Amateur Sports Act.

Current IAAF rules call for two-year bans on athletes for first-time steroid offenses. The US Amateur Sports Act prohibits a governing body from imposing harsher punishment criteria than that applied by international sports federations, a stipulation that has raised questions about the feasibility of the USATF's tough new policy.

A USATF committee shelved the proposed ban, a key part of the body's new anti-doping program, on Saturday night because of legal issues.

The ban was re-proposed on Sunday by the general session after an amendment was added calling for lifetime suspension for steroid use as long as such a rule would not violate any provision of the US Amateur Sports Act, according to the USATF's statement.

## Capital to Host 2005 Boxing World Championships

By Lei Li

The 13th world boxing championships will be held in Beijing in 2005, as revealed by the secretary general of the International Boxing Association, Turkey's Cane Doganelli, in a statement released in Istanbul last week. It will be the first time for China to host the international boxing event.

Boxers from over 50 countries and regions are expected to compete in the championships. It is one is a string of sporting events scheduled to be held in the Chinese capital in the lead up to the 2008 Olympic Games.

In Istanbul, Doganelli also announced that the international youth tournament would be held in South Korea in June 2004. The secretary general confirmed the association's intentions to include boxing as a demonstration sport in the World University Games of 2005 at the Turkish city of Izmir.

## IOC OKs Return of Shot Put to Athens Olympics

On Thursday at Lausanne, Switzerland, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) approved proposals by organizers of the Athens Olympics to stage shot put events at the 2004 Games.

The IOC executive board agreed to both men's and women's competitions, each involving 32 athletes, to be held in the Stadium of Ancient Olympia, about 320 kilometers southwest of Athens, on August 18.

Plans for the events call for no preparatory construction work at the stadium, no installment of temporary stands or scoreboards and limited media and spectator access.

"All of us are very moved and excited by this decision," Athens organizing chief Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki said. "Ancient Olympia is a timeless symbol marking the return of the Olympic Games to their homeland and linking the ancient Olympics with the modern Games."

It's not all about what we can get from the games ... but what we offer the games," she added.

The 2004 organizers originally planned to only hold the men's shot put event at Olympia, the venue for the original Olympic games of the ancient Greeks, but added the women's events in response to pressure from the sport's governing body, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF). (Xinhua)

## FBI Investigates Racist Hate Mail in NFL

Officials from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are looking into a series of hate mail sent to black players and cheerleaders in the National Football League (NFL) over the past year, according to reports on Friday.

The officials did not release details on the six pieces of hate mail, most of which came from Cleveland, the *Washington Post* reported.

Miami Dolphins defensive end Jason Taylor, an African American married to the white sister of teammate Zach Thomas, told the press he received at least one of the letters.

"I have nothing to say about it whatsoever," Taylor was quoted as saying. "It has nothing to do with being a player. It's society."

The NFL's security department sent memos to all teams warning they may receive such letters and advising proper procedures for handling and reporting them to team officials.

"All the letters are similar. It's stop dating and stop establishing relationships with white females or you'll be castrated, shot or set on fire," FBI special agent Robert Hawk said. "We have been unable to connect any acts of violence to them. So far it's been all talk and rhetoric." (Xinhua)



# England Celebrates Ruggers' Victory

On Sunday, thousands swarmed crowded in London's Trafalgar Square to celebrate the victory of the English national rugby team at the Rugby World Cup held in Australia last month.

Xinhua Photo

By Zhang Zhan

The international sports world is home to many sibling pairs that compete against and support each other. Below is a short list of some of the most famous brothers and sisters in sports:

### 1. Venus and Serena Williams – Tennis

These two young women have risen from humble beginnings to become the queens of women's tennis. Venus was the first to achieve tennis greatness, winning two Wimbledon and US Open singles titles, as well as gold in the singles and doubles event with her sister at the 2000 Olympics.

From a slower start, Serena, 22, has gone on to outshine her sister, dominating women's tennis for over a year until an unfortunate injury in early August has since kept her from play.

The Williams have set a long string of records for sisters, including being the first to meet in a US Open finals, on September 8, 2001, in over 100 years, and the first ever to hold world No. 1 and No. 2 rankings (in 2002). They are also the first sisters in tennis history to have each won a Grand Slam singles title, the first sisters to meet in a WTA Tour final at Miami in 1999 (Venus won), the first sisters to win gold for doubles tennis at an Olympic Games in 2000, and the only sisters in the 20th century to win a Grand Slam doubles title together.

### 2. Michael and Ralf Schumacher – Formula 1 racing

Michael Schumacher, 32, has stood for years as the most dominant driv-

er on the F1 circuit, bagging several world championships with his Ferrari team.

Younger brother Ralf, 28, drives for the strong Williams team and is a rising star in the F1 world. Time will tell whether he can catch up to his older brothers' success, but he certainly has his work cut out for him.

### 3. Li Dashuang and Li Xiaoshuang – Gymnastics

These twin brothers are known in China as the "twin world champions" and have both been members of the Chinese national gymnastics team.

After making the national team in 1990, Li Dashuang won first place all-around at the first East Asian Games, and was part of team golds at the 12th Asian Games and world championship in Dortmund in 1994.

Li Xiaoshuang, the marginally younger of the two, has proven the more successful athlete, winning a championship with his team at the 11th Asian Games in 1990, taking the gold for all-round performance at the national championships in 1991, and bagging team gold at the 1994 and 1995 world championships and at the 26th Olympic Games.

### 4. Morgan and Paul Hamm – Gymnastics

Elder brother Morgan, 21, has won three floor exercise golds at the 2000, 2002 and 2003 US National Champi-

onships.

Paul has been no less successful, winning first all-around and first in floor exercise at the 2003 World Championships, third in floor exercise at the 2002 World Championships, and silver with his team at the 2001 World Championships.

### 5. Pavel and Valeri Bure – Ice Hockey

These Russian brothers have carved out reputations for skill and tenacity at the same position on the rink, left wing. They are the first brother pair to play in the US National Hockey League at the same time.

In 1989, at the age of 18, Pavel Bure was named Rookie of the Year in the Soviet League. He has gone on to be an all-star wing in the NHL, currently playing for the New York Rangers.

Valeri, two years Pavel's junior, is a star of his own right, leading his Florida Panthers with 16 power-play goals and 276 shots in the 2000-01 season. He was also a part of the Russian team that won bronze at the 2002 winter Olympics.

### 6. Jeff and Stan Van Gundy – Basketball coaches

Jeff Van Gundy began his NBA coaching career in 1985, and went on to lead the New York Knicks to the NBA finals. This June, he took the helm at the Houston Rockets, where he coaches Chinese star Yao Ming.

Stan, the younger Van Gundy at 43, is making his debut as an NBA head coach this year with the Miami Heat.

### 7. Filippo and Simone Inzaghi – Football

Experienced and explosive Filippo Inzaghi is a powerful forward for AC Milan and a key player on the Italian nation team.

Brother Simone, born in 1976, is also very talented and expected to reach great heights in European football.

### 8. Gary and Philip Neville – Football

These two tough brothers play together in the defense of England's Manchester United team.

Gary joined the team in July 1991 and has been a regular in United's starting roster since 1994. He was along for the team's historic double in the 1995/96 season with brother Philip. He also played for England in the '98 World Cup and Euro 2000.

Philip has a promising future but has struggled with illness. That has not stopped him from helping United to four league championships, two FA Cups and a Champions League title.

### 9. Jean-Michel and Philippe Saive – Table-Tennis

Jean-Michel, 31, is a veteran of top international table tennis, bagging many medals and prizes in major events.

Brother Philippe has one of the best step-around loops in the world, which he puts to good use for the Belgian team.

# Siblings in Sports



# Chafing the Chills Away

Throw a rock in Beijing and you're likely to hit a restaurant that serves hot pot, perhaps the perfect meal for a cold winter day. Rarer places that depart from *huoguo* convention, however, can prove surprisingly satisfying, as is making hot pot at home.



Japanese style hot pot, or *shabu shabu*, at Kagen features smallish portions of very high quality ingredients.

Photos by Joel Kirkhart / Lou Ge

## Huoguo at Home

By Joel Kirkhart

Few meals can satisfy the stomach, stir the bowls and sooth the soul on a cold night better than hot pot. Yet many people are so used to going out for hot pot that they fail to realize that it is easy, economical and fun to make

from the comfort of home. Plus, the steaming pot can heat up the air when radiators are not doing the trick.

Step one in home hot potting is selecting a vessel. For household use, electric pots, available at department stores all over town, are probably the best choice, as they are easy to use and less fraught with potential danger than gas or coal-fueled models. Expect to pay upwards of 200 yuan for a good pot, which should have a non-stick coating, a cover and simple heat controls; a long power cord can also be handy.

The key to the success of any hot pot is the broth, or *guodi*. Cooks with the time and inclination can make hot pot a classier affair by boiling up a fine, homemade broth, from chicken and vegetables or even beef or fish. When time and convenience matter, there is no shame in going for pre-prepared options. Supermarkets and smaller stores around town offer packs of oil and spices to turn basic water in hearty hot pot bases spicy, mild, or somewhere in between, as well as lots of choices of dipping sauces in a range of flavors.

Remember that an added benefit of making a good *guodi* is it lessens the need for dipping sauce, thereby cutting many calories. Yet many would argue that hot pot is not really hot pot if there is no dipping sauce on the table. Store-bought versions are adequate, but can be very salty. Here is a recipe for a delicious, elaborate sauce that can be adapted to taste:

### Majiang Dipping Sauce

#### Ingredients:

8 tbsp sesame paste  
4 tbsp mashed red bean curd cheese (*furu*), plus 2 tbsp juice from the jar  
6 tbsp Shaoxing yellow wine (*huangjiu*)  
8 tbsp sugar  
3 tbsp light soy sauce  
3-4 tbsp hot chili oil  
4 tbsp sesame oil  
4 tbsp fish sauce (*yulu*)  
100 g cilantro leaves, rinsed and roughly chopped  
10-12 large spring onions, white sections only, cut into small rounds.

Simply stir all the above ingredients together until completely mixed, adding the cilantro and spring onions last. Serves four to six.

Nearly every market in town offers thin, curled slices of frozen lamb and beef meant specifically for hot pots. Quality can vary, but since it's all getting boiled in a heady broth, there is little reason to splurge on fancy meat.

Yet there's no reason to stop at such standard fare when hot potting at home. Spice things up with unusual ingredients, from asparagus spears to clams, small frozen dumplings to fresh shrimp, chunks of smoky *larou* (smoke-cured meat) to sliced tomatoes, to suit personal taste. When the pot is on your dining table, it is literally your party.



Store-bought sauces come in regular, spicy and cumin-flavored versions.



A complete, delicious hot pot meal for four can cost less than 50 yuan (beer not included).

## Old School Hot Pot

By James Liu

To truly appreciate the Chinese art of hot pot, it helps to have some background information on this fun and efficient cooking style.

Hot pot, or *huoguo* in Chinese, first appeared in some form thousands of years ago, when ancient Chinese used three-legged cooking vessels to boil meat over fire. However, the enormous weight of those early pots, called *ding*, meant they were far less than portable.

Centuries later, in the Western Zhou Dynasty (1,100 – 771 BC), people had mastered the skills to produce smaller pottery, copper and iron vessels that took heat well and were much easier to move around. Those inventions sparked the creation of hot pot in a form still recognizable today, normally fueled by charcoal.

Modern electric pots make hot pot easier to cook than ever, but many Chinese would argue that the highest quality, truest-tasting *huoguo* can only be made over a charcoal-burning fire. Using a traditional coal-burning pot at home is not as scary it may sound, but caution is advised.

1. Choose about one dozen small charcoal pieces and put them into a coal stove, or light them using lighter fluid in a safe, ventilated space.

2. When half of each charcoal is lit and glowing red, remove them from heat and put them into the chimney. Make sure they are spread evenly.

3. Place the hot pot in a tray with about two centimeters of water to prevent it from overheating.

4. Add larger chunks of charcoal until the chimney is nearly full. Put the hot pot in a well ventilated spot or use fans to get the fresh coals to light quickly.

5. Keep in mind that the actual eating area of a hot pot should be filled with cold water or broth before the coal completely lights. Cooking liquid should reach a boil within 30 minutes.

6. Have a cup of cold water handy for safety reasons and prepare a metal lid that can cover the chimney. If the coals burn too hot, partly cover the chimney to slow the fire.

Once you have got the hang of safely handling a coal-fueled hot pot, cooking up a whole meal is very easy.

Arrange cleaned leaves of Chinese cabbage at the bottom of the cooking area, topped by a layer of thin rice or wheat noodles. Then add slices of dried sea cucumber, mushrooms and oysters, along with fresh pork, sliced potatoes and greens. Sprinkle three tablespoons of salt evenly over the ingredients. Then add a splash of cooking wine and soy sauce and enough broth to nearly fill the pot. When the broth comes to a rolling boil, it is time to dig in.

## Twists on Tradition at Chuanlitun

By Sarah Bai

Over the past year or so, the back streets of Sanlitun have risen as a dining destination and one restaurant in the area definitely worth checking out is Chuanlitun, a specialist in unusual hot pots and spicy Sichuan fare.

The pictorial hot pot menu offers several kinds of basic broths, ranging from the familiar, such as spicy Sichuan and healthy milk broth, to the far more exotic, including Thai yellow curry (*taiguo huang gali*), tom yam gong (*taiguo dong yang gong*) and Korean kimchi (*hanguo suancai tang*) soups. The Thai varieties are winners, both wonderfully fragrant with good levels of spice. The sour, complex tom yam gong broth is excellent for stewing mushrooms and greens, while the curry is better for meats. The spicy Sichuan broth was well-done, long on chili pepper heat but not too heavy on oil. The pots are reasonably priced and can come with up to three sections. A one-broth pot fetches just 10 yuan, while a pot with three different broths costs 30 yuan.

Chuanlitun also departs from hot pot tradition with its selection of dipping sauces. While the traditional sesame paste and sesame oil and garlic sauces are available, again it pays to try one of their more creative versions. The Thai sour and spicy sauce (*taishi suanlazi*) has good kick and a nice spicy bite that complements the tom yam gong broth. The seafood sauce (*haixianzhi*) is a thin, soy sauce-based mixture that tastes great on meat and tofu. Another definite winner is the almost pesto-like *xiangcaojiang*. These can be ordered separately or in sampler size.

Even the dipping ingredients are special here. While most of the standards, including lamb (*yanguopian*, 18 yuan) and lotus root, are available,



Hand-cut beef (shouqie niurou), 38 yuan

the menu also includes such tempting items as little dumplings (*yupi jiao*, 18 yuan), raw shrimp on skewers (*zhujian xianxia*, 30 yuan), a mushroom sampler that is tremendously fresh and tasty (*mogu shijinlan*, 18 yuan) and even cheese sausages (*zhishi changzai*, 15 yuan). Among the meats, emphasis is on beef, ranging from basic slices to the pricey *longtang chuyi* (38 yuan), which was nice and tender but not necessarily worth the added expense.

On the whole, Chuanlitun's unconventional hot pot is not the kind that fanatics will want to eat all the time, but it does make for a delicious change of pace and fun way to warm up on a cold night. Service is also outstanding, friendly and helpful but not imposing.

The restaurant has a separate menu for dishes, with an emphasis on spicy Sichuan and homestyle Beijing fare. Though it has yet to be confirmed, the house's *shuizhuyu*, or fish in hot oil, smells like it should be excellent.

**Where:** 7 Sanlitun Beili, Chaoyang **Open:** 11 am – 11:30 pm **Tel:** 6417 7770 **Average price:** 50 yuan per person

## Shabu Falls a Bit Short at Kagen

By Joel Kirkhart

After rising to success by introducing Beijing to the glories of California-style sushi rolls at Hatsune, restaurateur Alan Wang is hoping to add another feather to his cap with his new joint, Kagen. Located in a basement below Hatsune, this very hip eatery is aimed at filling another culinary niche, high-quality Japanese hot pot and barbecue. An initial test meal, however, indicated that if this restaurant makes it, it will be on the strength of the barbecue options – the hot pot is OK, but fails to truly satisfy.

The sprawling underground restaurant manages to skillfully pull off the industrial-chic thing, the spare concrete walls classed up by textured swaths, the ducts and pipes above painted bright red and the tables surfaced in attractive buffed metal. A design element sure to divide opinion is the door, triggered by waving one's hand through a pink light on the side. Obviously, this can be bewildering to the uninitiated, and the window looking onto the door seems to be there at least partly for "point and laugh" reasons.

Ordering a hot pot meal begins by choosing one of three soup base options – clear broth with kou-bu, spicy kimchee or miso with black shoots. As a soup on its own, the miso broth was very delicious,



Paper shabu shabu, 40 to 60 yuan

but it was not great as a hot pot base, as its subtle flavor was not able to penetrate any but the thinnest of dunkables. Moreover, it came without dipping sauce, a policy the kitchen could think about changing. Ingredients for boiling are of premium quality, but portions are a bit paltry. One of the most impressive is the sliced beef (50 yuan), paper-thin slices of beautifully marbled meat that are able to pick up some of the broth's subtle flavors. Larger but less notable is a plate of sliced frozen chicken (30 yuan). The seafood options are alluring, including fresh fish, prawns (30 yuan) and mussels (30 yuan), yet portions are less than generous with only eight of each on a platter. The same is true for the assorted mushrooms (18 yuan), which compares unfavorably to the massive platter served up at the same price at Chuanlitun (see review at left).

Service is friendly but a bit overeager, as close monitoring of our pot put a damper on conversation and gave the meal a rushed feeling.

Though Kagen's hot pot may not be the most flavorful, it is likely one of the healthiest around, as ingredients are very fresh and the broth is nearly oil free. And yet it is precisely that light quality that keeps this from being the kind of hot pot to inspire hard-core eating sessions. From the smells wafting over from other tables, the barbecue seemed more likely to fit that bill.

**Where:** B1, Heqiao Dasha Building C, No. 8A Guanghua Donglu, Chaoyang **Open:** 11:30 am – 2 pm, 5:30-10 pm **Tel:** 6583 6830, 6583 6831 **Average cost:** 60 yuan per person



## Exhibitions

## Photos from the New Long March

A show of photographs taken by two Englishmen as they retraced the Long March over the past year.

**Where:** Xiang Shenghang, Meishuguan Dongjie, next to the Sanlian Bookstore, Dongcheng  
**When:** December 18-23, 8:30 am – 8:30 pm **Tel:** 8403 0438

## Oil Paintings Exhibition



A show of the latest oil paintings by 16 prominent artists including Wang Wenjun, Xiao Fangkan and Zhao Mengge.

**Where:** New Millennium Art Gallery, second floor, Diyang Building, 2 Dongsanhuan Beilu  
**When:** December 13 – January 15, 9 am – 6 pm **Admission:** free  
**Tel:** 8453 6193

## Collection Exhibition

Paintings of people by 20 contemporary artists.

**Where:** East Gallery, Deshengmen Watchtower, Beierhuan Zhonglu  
**When:** till January 5, 9 am – 5 pm (closed Mondays) **Admission:** 2 yuan **Tel:** 8201 4902

## Auction



## Guardian Auction

The 78th Guardian Auction runs Friday through Sunday and features paintings by famous artists, as well as porcelain, sculpture and embroidery works.

**Where:** Jianguo Hotel **When:** 10 am – 6 pm **Tel:** 6518 2315

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By Guo Yuandan / Wenlong

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## Sports

## Lido Winter Tennis Camp

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**Where:** Lido Country Club  
**When:** December 15-19 **Tel:** 6437 6688

## Lecture

## Colombian Folklore

Luis Jorge Roa Corredor, Cultural Attache of the Colombian Embassy, explains concepts and types of Colombian folklore and traditional dance. Some dances will be performed. Lecture in Chinese, English and Spanish.

**Where:** Jintai Art Museum, inside Chaoyang Park **When:** Tonight, 7-9 pm **Tel:** 6501 4984

## Jams

## Tetsuwan Returns

Party like the summer never ended at a night of live music by Muma, Verse, and the Sands.

**Where:** CD Café **When:** Tonight, 9 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan (adults), 30 yuan (students) **Tel:** 13910755412, 13011178627

## Afro-Caribbean Beat Night

After a test run last month in Haidian, this funky night of African beats and Caribbean grooves with DJs Albert and C and guest DJ Nob, comes to Chaoyang.

**Where:** Kwans (Island Club), 16 Tuanjiehu Nanli, off East Third Ring Road **When:** Saturday, 10 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 13681061172

## An Ear to the Ground

In a special Christmas edition of this concert series, organized by LogistiX and the Volkswagen (China) Sound Foundation in co-operation with the Beijing Midi School and Yan Club, bands Second Hand Roses (*Ershou Meigui*), Catcher in the Rye, Buyi and Long Kuan Jiu Duan will rock the house.

**Where:** Yan Club, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** December 18, 8:30 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 8404 9607, 8457 3506

## Movies

## Hero (Ying Xiong)

Directed by Zhang Yimou, starring Jet Li, Tony Leung, Maggie Cheung and Chen Daoming. This all-star film, the biggest commercial success in mainland history, depicts a famed plot to assassinate China's first emperor through a series of beautifully-shot episodes told from different characters' perspectives. Chinese with English subtitles

**Where:** Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu **When:** Tonight and Saturday, 8 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 1390113 4745

## Infernal Affairs III (Wujiandao III)



Directed by Andrew Lau, starring Andy Lau, Anthony Wong, Tony Leung, Leon Lai, Chen Daoming and Kelly Chen. The highly anticipated third installment in the hit series of crime thrillers about bad cops and undercover agents.

**Where:** UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Kexueyuan Nanlu, Shuangyushu, Haidian **When:** Starting today **Admission:** 80 yuan **Tel:** 6261 2851

## The Night of the Shooting Stars (La Notte di San Lorenzo)

Directed by Paolo and Emilio Taviani, starring Omero Antonutti, Margarita Lozan. American liberation is promised within days, but the Nazis have rigged village houses with mines, so the residents of San Martin flee to the dangerous countryside. But as one character observes, "even true stories can end well." Italian with English subtitles.

**Where:** Cultural Office of the Italian Embassy, 2 Dong'erjie, Sanlitun **When:** December 18, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187

## Mobile Phone (Shouji)

Directed by Feng Xiaogang, starring Ge You and Xu Fan. The beloved director has given away few secrets about the plot of his latest New Year picture, but it is known to have something to do with love, lying and mobile phones.

**Where:** UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Kexueyuan Nanlu, Shuangyushu, Haidian **When:** starting December 18 **Admission:** 80 yuan **Tel:** 6261 2851



## The First Beijing International Dance Festival

### World Dancers Rendezvous

Artists from North America and Europe will warm up the capital this winter during the first Beijing International Dance Festival. During the event, which opens today and runs until January 20 next year, those dancers will join top domestic troupes, such as the Central Ballet and the Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble, in over 50 performances.

### Romance and Talent

The prestigious Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble opens the dance festival with the Romance and Talent gala. Solo vocalists including

Liu Weiwei, Cheng Fangyuan and Guo Rong will accompany colorful dances.

**Where:** Poly Theatre, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** 7:30 pm, December 12-22 **Admission:** 200-500 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188 ext. 5682

### Swan Lake with Chinese Characteristics

The domestic Central Ballet Ensemble will stage their take on the classic *Swan Lake*.

**Where:** Century Theater, Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** December 19-21 **Tel:** 6466 0032, 6466 3311 ext. 3161 **Admission:** 180-580 yuan

## Stage

### She's So Lovely (Ke'ai Yuanchouren)

Directed by Wang Rongyu, performed by the Gold Branch Drama Group of Taiwan. This play combines traditional and modern styles to tell stories adapted from Western classics and folk tales.

**Where:** Beijing Beizhan Theatre, near Xizhimen **When:** December 17-21, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 30-150 yuan **Tel:** 6406 0175

### Dream Without Romance (Fei Aiqing de Meng)

Presented by the Taiwan Yingwuji Performance Troupe. An abstract story of dreams in heaven.

**Where:** Millennium Memorial Hall, Beijing University

**When:** Saturday and Sunday, 7 pm **Admission:** 20-80 yuan **Tel:** 6275 2278

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# Holiday South of the Border Ten days down Nepal way

Earlier this year, Nepal granted Chinese tourists visa-free status. Since then, Royal Air Nepal has opened direct flights between Shanghai and Kathmandu. As more and more Beijingers choose foreign countries as their travel destinations, Nepal is likely to become a popular choice for those in search of an exotic get-away.



Jewelry shop in Kathmandu



Rafting in Royal Chitwan National Park



Early morning view of the mountains surrounding Pokhara  
Photo by Jane Ram

By Jane Ram / Jian Rong

Most of my fellow passengers on the flight from Shanghai to Kathmandu were elderly Japanese pilgrims, heading for Lumbini, birthplace of Buddha. Others were trekkers, readily identifiable by serious looking rucksacks, clumpy boots, walking sticks, water bottles and other paraphernalia dangling from their belts.

Squeezed between India and China, Nepal covers some 147,000 square kilometers, yet within its borders lie eight of the world's 10 highest mountain peaks. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of the highest of them all, Sagarmatha, known as Everest in the west and Qomolangma in China. But Nepal offers much more than snow-clad peaks. And I had nothing more strenuous in mind than some cultural and eco-tourism, along with a little mountain gazing.

## Kathmandu

Kathmandu was freshly washed by the recent monsoon rains. Durbar Square was pulsing with life as pilgrims made the rounds of the many shrines and temples.

Wherever I looked, someone was sprucing up shabby paintwork, digging weeds out of the stonework of the ancient buildings or making garlands of orange or yellow marigolds ahead of the biggest celebrations of the year to mark Tihar, the Festival of Lights, known as Diwali in India, and the Newar New Year.

The all-seeing painted eyes of Boudhanath are Kathmandu's most familiar icon. Dating back some 14 centuries, this is one of the world's largest stupas. Included on UNESCO's World Heritage list since 1979, Boudhanath is regarded as Nepal's center of Tibetan Buddhism. In the early morning, it makes an impressive and colorful sight.

Thronges of pilgrims from remote regions of the country make the trip of a lifetime in order to complete the clockwise circuit of the stupa. Dressed in their best and most colorful clothes, they carry rosaries in one hand and prayer wheels in the other.

Nepal has over 60 distinct ethnic groups, but it is easy to identify the tall and ferocious looking Khampas from the remote eastern region of Nepal. They are an awe-inspiring sight with red wool plaited into their hair and long knives tucked casually into their belts.

I could have spent weeks exploring Kathmandu, and months more on the two other ancient capitals of the Kathmandu Valley, Patan and Bhaktapur. But they had to wait as I had an appointment with an elephant some 165 kilometers away in Chitwan National Park.

## Royal Chitwan National Park

In their own way, Nepal's lowland jungle wildlife reserves are as spectacular as the mountains.

tains. The largest and closest to Kathmandu is the Royal Chitwan National Park, not so long ago a private royal hunting ground.

These days the hunting is all done with cameras. Generally regarded as one of Asia's best wildlife parks, tall elephant grass forms an ideal hiding place for 40 species of mammals, 450 species of birds and 45 species of amphibians. Chitwan is also famous for butterflies, especially at the end of the monsoon season, and its many orchid varieties, which are at their best during the monsoon.

This is the largest remaining section of what was once almost continuous jungle stretching from Burma to Pakistan. There are six small resorts within the 1,000-square-kilometre reserve. The animals move freely from one end to the other, but even when they are nearby, there are no guarantees that you will actually see them, as I discovered.

With its rustic wood and thatch buildings, Machan Resort was an experience in itself. Despite the lack of electricity (small kerosene lamps glimmer in bedroom and bathroom) rooms are spacious and comfortable, with excellent beds. Dining room, bar, library and swimming pool are supplemented by what soon became my favorite place, a shaded wooden terrace that juts out over the grassland 20 meters below, giving a bird's eye view of wildlife and the river beyond.

Minutes after an early morning call I was listening to the dawn chorus from my seat on Pawan Kali, one of the resort's younger female elephants. The mahout, or handler, used his feet to steer her through the pearly mists in search of wildlife. Several types of deer, wild boar, monkeys and a few birds made up the total for the day. But my perch some three meters above the ground provided some delightful close encounters with exotic orchids and ferns at eye level, although this all sounded rather tame by comparison with another early riser's sight of a leopard stalking a deer.

A second expedition in late afternoon had its own thrills. The elephant's strong smell masks human odors and in theory makes it possible to approach close to shy creatures. Bird life was abundant, most notably the unseen but almost non-stop serenade by the black hooded orioles. Animals, however, remained invisible.

At the end of another fruitless excursion we were homeward bound when my guide pointed downward to tracks in the sand. It must have been like Grand Central Station shortly before we arrived on the scene: deer and tiger prints were all over the place. The grass grew high and dense on either side, and all too easily I could imagine the tiger laughing as he played hide and seek with us. On reflection I decided that perhaps I was not too eager for an encounter with a real live tiger after all.

## Pokhara

The charms of Pokhara came as a complete contrast to the solitude and rustic style of jungle dwelling. The bustling lakeside town in the foothills of the Himalayas has long been a major trading post between Nepal's neighbors. Until the first roads were constructed in the 1970s, everything was carried in by mule train or on the backs of local porters. The first plane landed in Pokhara in 1952, and the town's first oxcart was flown in the following year.

Even today roads are problematic in the monsoon season and the 200-kilometer journey to Kathmandu can take at least half a day. The flight by small aircraft takes less than an hour, but I enjoyed the opportunity to see something of rural life along the way.

These days Pokhara is the starting and finishing point for most trekkers who spend anything from three hours to three weeks or more walking through Nepal's wide-open spaces. Boots, sleeping bags and tents are sold in dozens of little shops near the lake. This is a great place to stock up on maps, guidebooks and other reading material, also Kashmiri and Rajasthani textiles and handicrafts of all kinds, and Nepalese antiques.

Restaurants and small cafes offer everything from banana pancakes and sizzling steak to a bewildering array of Indian and Nepalese specialties. I enjoyed the Boomerang and Kangaroo Pub, with its huge lakeside garden. Pokhara must have hundreds of small and not so small guesthouses. But for sheer beauty and laid-back bliss it would be hard to beat the Shangri-La Village resort (no connection to the Malaysian-based chain).

## Bhaktapur

Once back in Kathmandu I lost no time before heading for the 12th-century capital, Bhaktapur, some 10 kilometers from Kathmandu. Its many generous squares, linked by narrow winding lanes of brick homes, its ornately decorated temples and palaces form a living museum, where the local inhabitants go about their daily routine seemingly unaware of visitors. People make offerings at the hundreds of shrines, fill their water pots, bath and wash their laundry at the waterspouts of open-air baths constructed centuries ago.

Wherever I walked, craftsmen of all kinds were at work. Potters, spinners, wood carvers, embroiderers and metal workers were turning out exquisite pieces for everyday use. Most of the inhabitants are still farmers and the air was laden with the scent of freshly harvested rice, which was drying in the sun, or being threshed in every available space, regardless of cars, motorcycles and pedestrians. Souvenir sellers with their bamboo flutes almost disappeared in the sea of farmers selling fruit and vegetables and other provisions for the approaching festival.

Food in Bhaktapur is not Nepal's best, but at Cafe Nyatapola at the side of the market I paused for a bowl of the freshly made Royal Yogurt that is famous throughout the country. Lightly flavored by the smoky fire over which the rich buffalo milk was heated, it sustained me very well through the afternoon.

## Patan

Patan is almost a suburb of Kathmandu these days, which makes it very easy to reach. Its ancient section is much smaller than Bhaktapur's mediaeval sprawl. Back in the seventh century Patan was famous as one of the world's most important Buddhist cities and it grew into the largest of the Three Kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley.

It was renowned in earliest times as a center of artists and fine craftsmen whose descendants still work in stone, precious metals and wood in different sections of the ancient town. German, Austrian and Japanese experts have worked with local artisans on the restoration of the central sections of the old city.

Durbar Square is truly magnificent and yet so harmonious that I did not find it overpowering. Unfortunately the museum was closed for the festival, so I had to postpone my plan to pause in the Museum Cafe before heading for the Golden Temple and its breathtakingly beautiful decoration.

## Travel Tips

- Many itineraries compress a tour of Nepal into one week, but I enjoyed the more leisureed 10 days, which gave me time to think about what I experienced. But I left feeling that 10 weeks would be even better for full appreciation of what must be one of the world's most fascinating and varied destinations.

- Tribhuvan, four kilometers from the center of Kathmandu, is Nepal's only international airport. There are currently two weekly flights between Shanghai and Kathmandu.

- Accommodation in Kathmandu fits all budgets, from small guesthouses in Thamel (try eco-friendly Kantipoor House (US\$50) to international brands including the Hyatt Regency, Radisson and super-efficient and friendly Soaltee Crowne Plaza.

- Machan Resort at Royal Chitwan National Park offers two-night packages including all meals and activities from US \$150.

- Shangri-La Village at Pokhara offers accommodation from US\$140.

Patan's Durbar Square

Photos by Maria Boyd / Liu Na

